

SAN LUIS OBISPO

Mid Higuera Street Enhancement Plan



Madonna Road looking toward Higuera Street

MARCH 2001



**City of San Luis Obispo
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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- Explain how you can achieve your goals under the City's rules;
- Help resolve problems in an open, objective manner;
- Maintain high ethical standards; and
- Work to improve our service.



SAN LUIS OBISPO

Mid Higuera Street Enhancement Plan



Adopted March 20, 2001

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A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

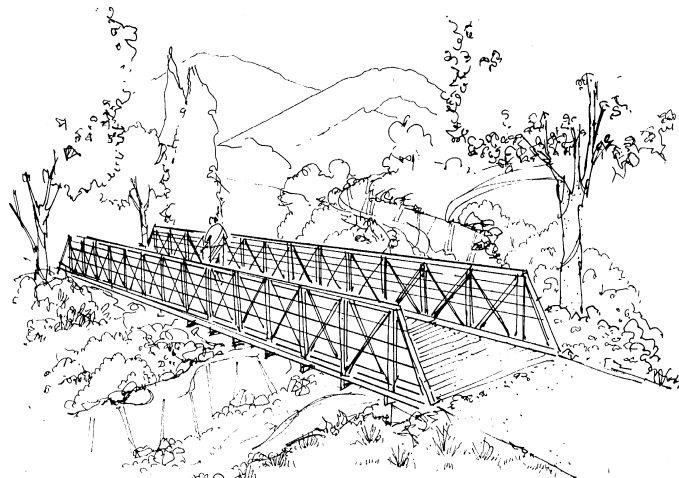
This Enhancement Plan includes public policies and public investment strategies that aim toward a more attractive and functional future for the Mid-Higuera Street area. Some of the improvements can be implemented relatively soon; others may take many years to completely realize. The plan, accordingly, illustrates changes that can probably be made in the short term as well as the full complement of changes that can only be achieved over the long term. The latter group includes the reuse of some of the larger parcels (CalTrans and Hayward Lumber, for example) which will be contingent on decisions by the property owners to relocate or otherwise alter the existing uses. Other projects may take time because of complex engineering, regulatory requirements, or high costs. Nonetheless, the plan reflects the community preferences for the area even if this vision takes many steps, over time. The following vignettes describe the Mid-Higuera Enhancement area of the future:

Flood Hazard Mitigation

Flooding mitigation. The capacities of the creek and of the Marsh Street bridge have been increased to better handle storm drainage. Coupled with the City's comprehensive strategy for San Luis Obispo Creek and related improvements upstream and downstream, the frequency and severity of flooding have been reduced. In addition, drainage from the South Street hills to Bridge and Higuera streets has been improved, reducing flooding in the cemetery and along Higuera Street.

Land Uses

Open space along the creek. San Luis Obispo creek between Marsh and Madonna functions as a productive natural habitat, rich in native plants and animals. Over time, the entire area between the creek and the freeway has become a public open space reserve. People may walk or bicycle along separate paths that run along side, but separated from the creek; other uses are limited to passive recreation such as bird watching. Bianchi Lane bridge is used only by pedestrians and occasional light-duty maintenance vehicles. Pedestrian and bicycle bridges, such as the one shown in Figure 1, provide access at several locations along the creek and links downtown with Avila Beach via the Bob Jones City-to-the-Sea Bike Trail.



*Figure 1
Bicycle/Pedestrian bridge near the end of
South Street*

A new look and new uses at Madonna and Higuera. The former CalTrans properties have been converted to new uses. South of Madonna Road, a new visitor-serving facility has been built, including meeting rooms and convention facilities. This center routinely attracts such functions as annual meetings of organizations, educational symposia and similar events. The location is ideal, adjacent to the freeway interchange, with transit and pedestrian links to downtown and other shopping areas. It is within easy strolling distance to the creek, open spaces, parks, restaurants and cafes, professional offices and the live theater on South Street. Majestic Sycamore trees still grace the Higuera Street frontage. The historic brick building that once housed CalTrans offices has been preserved and adapted to serve new uses while



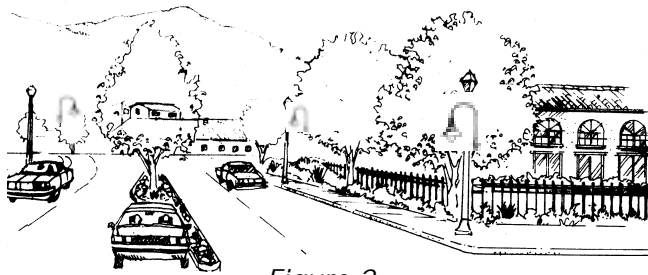


Figure 2
Madonna Road / Conference Center

retaining its original architectural charm. Across Madonna Road, the City has acquired the former CalTrans property and built a new park, with links to the creek open space and the Bob Jones City-to-the-Sea bike trail. The park includes interpretative displays, artwork and landscaping that recall the history of this area, including its role as home to San Luis Obispo's Japanese-American community prior to World War II. Brook Street has been extended to form a cul-de-sac, allowing compatible development of additional small houses or duplex apartments. Madonna Road now features a new landscaped median which enhances the nearby conference center and hotel, as shown in Figure 2.

Mixed uses and better access to businesses. The uses along Higuera Street are still largely commercial. Many cater to downtown employees providing goods and services not often found in the in the cen-



Figure 3
Creekside outdoor spaces

tral business district, such as electric car recharging stations, discount food and dry goods outlets, and computer and small appliance repair. As properties redevelop with new uses, vehicle access to these uses is largely provided from parking in the rear – from Parker Street or from a new common driveway that runs parallel to Higuera Street between South Street and Bianchi Lane. New, more convenient bus stops have improved public transit service in the area.

On the east side of Parker Street, a mix of offices, small start-up businesses, non-profit headquarters and upstairs live/work housing has developed. Residents walk or bike to downtown, jog along the creek path, and take in a live performance at the theater at the corner of South and Parker Streets. This district has artisans who like the “live-work” opportunities with their shops and studios on the first floor and apartments above. Along San Luis Obispo creek, a mix of retail and food service businesses has developed, with parking off of the common driveway and windows and patios facing the creek. These patios are interconnected by an adjacent walkway along the creek. Above these stores and cafes are offices that look out onto the riparian scene below.

New multifamily housing. The older mobile home parks were gradually removed and redeveloped with new uses after the new apartments and condominiums were built on Beebee near Bridge Street. This complex includes both market rate and affordable housing units. Started by a joint venture of private developers and a non-profit housing provider, the facility is now managed by a separate non-profit group. Many of the former mobile home owners opted to buy or rent these new units.



Street Improvements

Higuera Street improvements. People strolling along Higuera Street enjoy improved sidewalks and the addition of public artwork, street trees, benches and decorative lighting. Cars flow smoothly due to the widening of the street, and a new landscape median – broken at key locations for turn lanes – has transformed and softened the appearance of the streetscape. At Pacific Street, the confusing and sub-standard intersection has been improved; Walker Street has been turned into a cul-de-sac with a pedestrian “mini-plaza” at Higuera Street. Bianchi Lane has been realigned with High Street to improve the safety and efficiency of that important intersection, as shown in Figure 5.

Brook Street improvements. With redevelopment of the former CalTrans site at the northwest corner of Higuera Street and Madonna Road, Brook Street has been extended south as a two-lane cul-de-sac street within the former CalTrans property. The church that was located within the Brook Street right-of-way has been relocated within the neighborhood and a new neighborhood park developed adjacent to the creek. An on-street bikeway extends from South Street through the former CalTrans property to Madonna Road, and eventually, south to Avila Beach via the Bob Jones City-To-Sea Bikeway. An emergency access road links Brook Street with the Gateway Park and Madonna Road.

Parker Street. Parker Street has been changed from a bleak industrial way into a handsome street with curbside parking, trees, sidewalks, textured crosswalks, decorative light fixtures and benches, as shown in Figure 6.



Figure 4
Widened Higuera Street, Southbound at Marsh Street

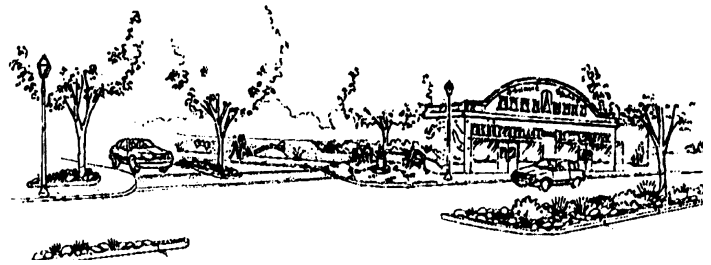


Figure 5
Pacific Street mini-plaza



Figure 6
Parker Street enhancement



Aesthetics and History

More attractive buildings and streetscape. Overhead utility lines and billboard signs along Higuera Street were removed. Street trees have been planted in sidewalks along both sides of Higuera Street and in the landscaped median planter, beautifying this key gateway by introducing more trees to visually unify the entire corridor.

New development follows design guidelines that have resulted in more attractive buildings that are sensitive to the area's architectural character and scenic backdrop created by San Luis Obispo creek and Cerro San Luis. New buildings along Higuera Street are designed to preserve views of Cerro San Luis, and development along the Creek is setback from the top of creek bank while taking advantage of creek views.

Facade Remodeling Concept for the Mid-Higuera District



Respect for history. The rich history of the Mid-Higuera area continues to be reflected in the diversity of structures, uses, and residents. Although many of the structures have been renovated, the influences of the railroad and the highway are still evident in the ir design and amenities. Key historic buildings have been preserved and put to new uses and the City's new policies for the District have created a series of plaques, artwork, and monuments that trace the evolution of the area from horses and railroads to a two-lane highway, then to a key mixed-use commercial district.

The Brook Street neighborhood, now designated as a historic district, continues as a mixed residential and commercial area with a new neighborhood park near the south end of Brook Street which celebrates the cultural contributions of the Japanese-American community while enhancing the neighborhood's recreational opportunities.



Mid Higuera Street
Enhancement Plan
Background



BACKGROUND

The Mid-Higuera Enhancement District

This document is an “enhancement plan” for the “Mid-Higuera” area of San Luis Obispo. Roughly speaking, the plan area encompasses the Higuera Street corridor and parallel creekway between Marsh Street and Madonna Road. Figure 7 shows the plan area’s boundary more precisely.

PROJECT AREA CONTEXT

The Mid-Higuera area merits special attention for several reasons. It is a “gateway corridor”, located between two major freeway interchanges, both major entries to San Luis Obispo. Higuera Street serves as the principal commercial street connecting Downtown to the City’s next largest retail area on Madonna Road (Figure 8). This section of Higuera Street once served as the historic “El Camino Real.” Its role as the main route through town, prior to the freeway, is reflected in a rich history and interesting mix of land uses.

Today, the area includes some significant non-conforming uses, including the Brook Street neighborhood in a service-commercial district. Furthermore, the appearance of the streets - and of certain buildings, parking lots and signs - should be improved to current standards. San Luis Obispo Creek winds through the area, providing opportunities for views, habitat enhancement, and recreation. this reach of the creek but also upstream and downstream of the plan area. The presence of the creek, however, has also

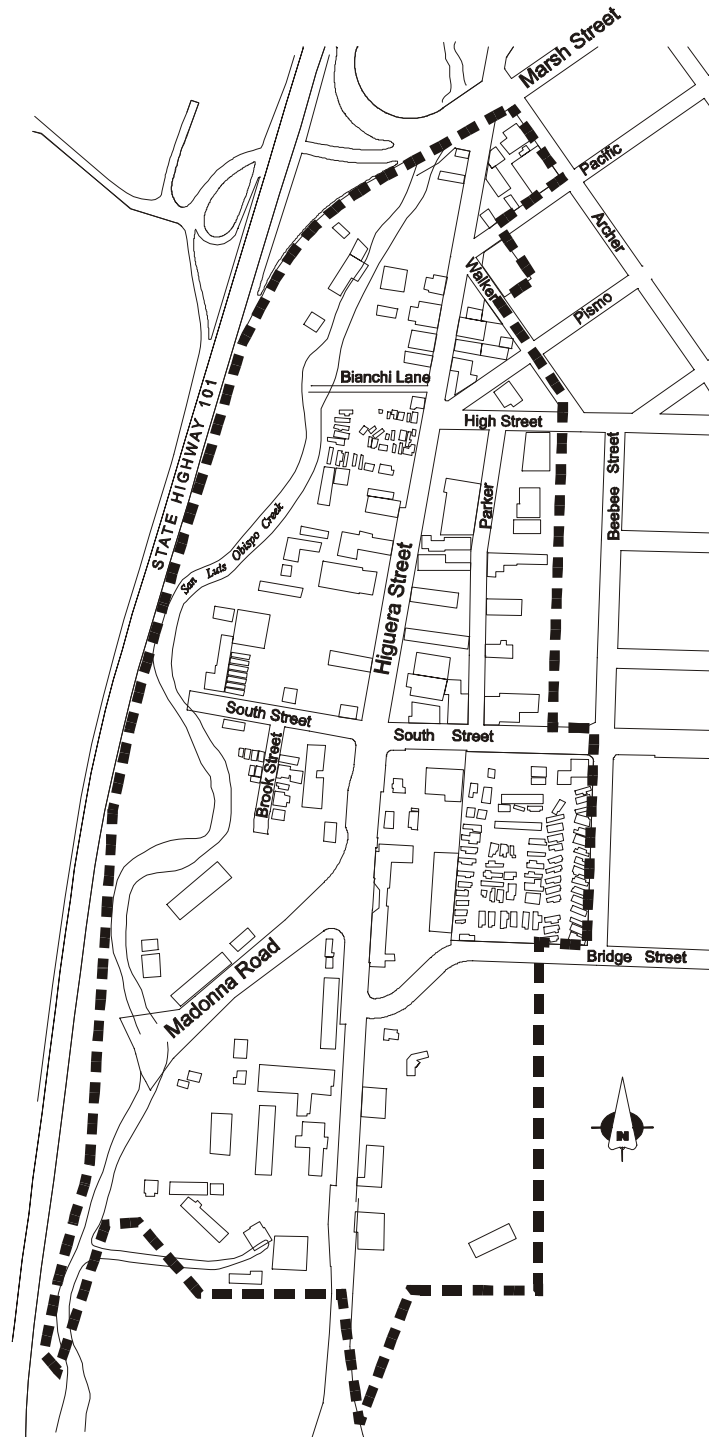
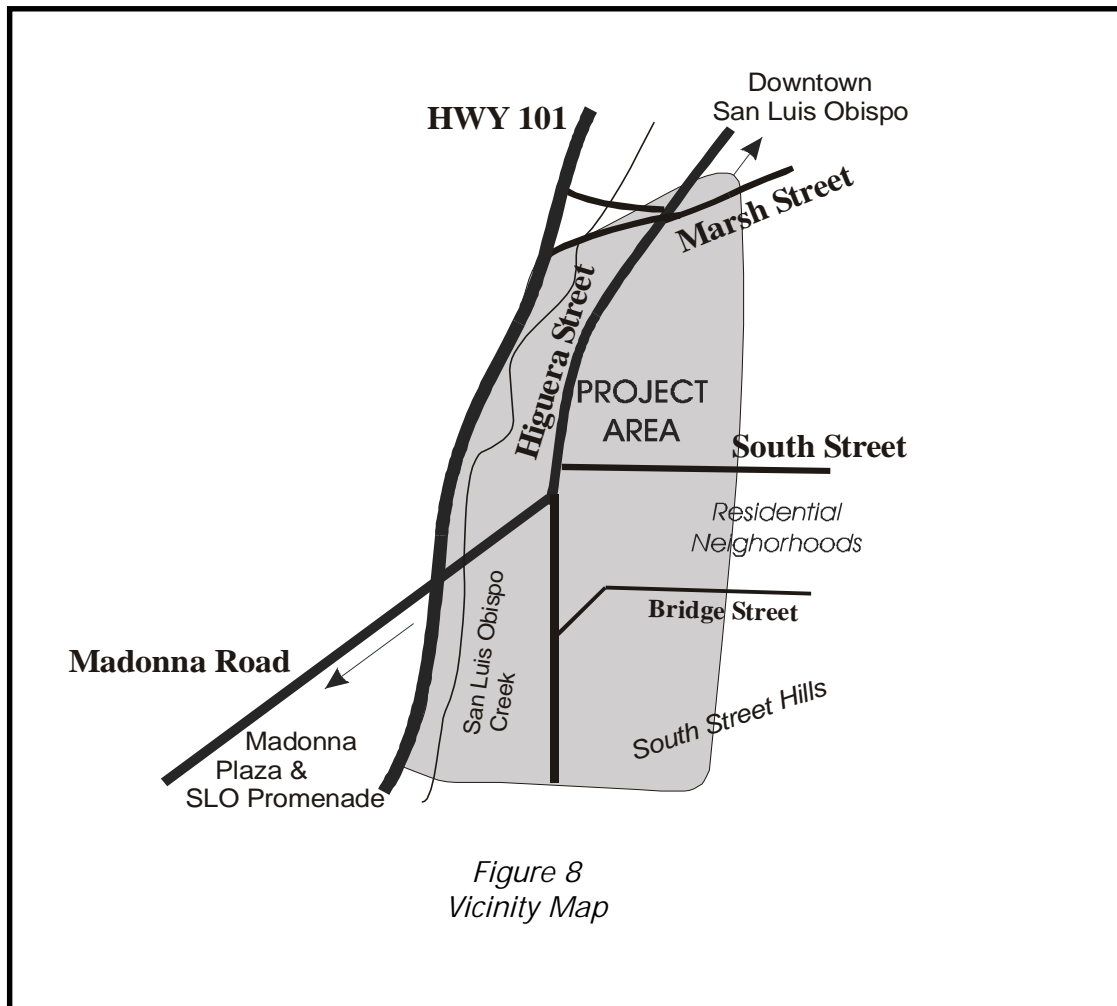


Figure 7
The Mid-Higuera Plan Area

meant periodic flooding resulting from a complex set of variables found not only in this reach of the creek but also upstream and downstream of the plan area. The following section summarizes existing conditions and plan objectives, notes some special uses found in the plan area, and highlights key issues addressed in the plan.



EXISTING CONDITIONS AND IMPORTANT FEATURES

Most of the Mid-Higuera area is zoned "Commercial-Service" or "C-S", a zone which allows a wide range of land uses, including auto repair, lumberyards, automobile and home appliance sales, restaurants, some kinds of offices and shops, and light-industrial uses. This regulatory flexibility has contributed to a mix of many kinds of land uses within a relatively small area. It has also added to the area's unique character with a mix of features, as shown in Figure 9. Some of these features present special opportunities for achieving community goals. The area also contains several planning problems or constraints that adversely affect its activities and appearance. These problems include flooding, narrow streets and awkward intersections, unattractive street views and delapidated or unsightly buildings, non-conforming land uses, and localized parking deficiencies for some businesses and residents.



Greyhound Bus Station



Brook Street Residences



Old Mission Cemetery

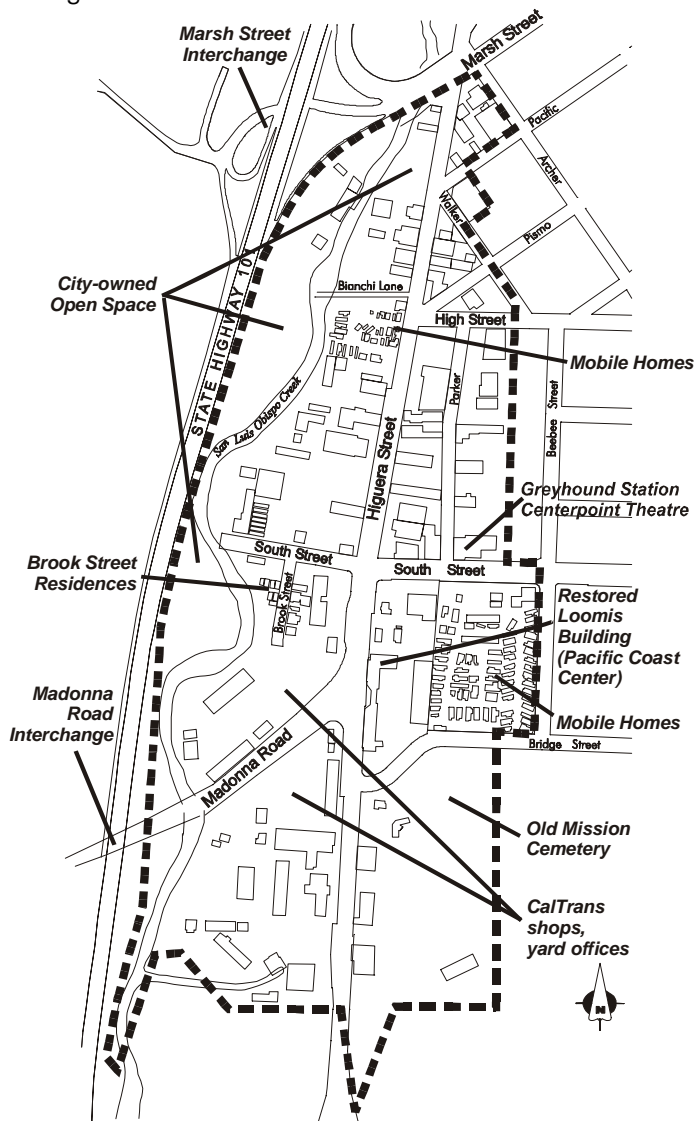


Figure 9. Important Features



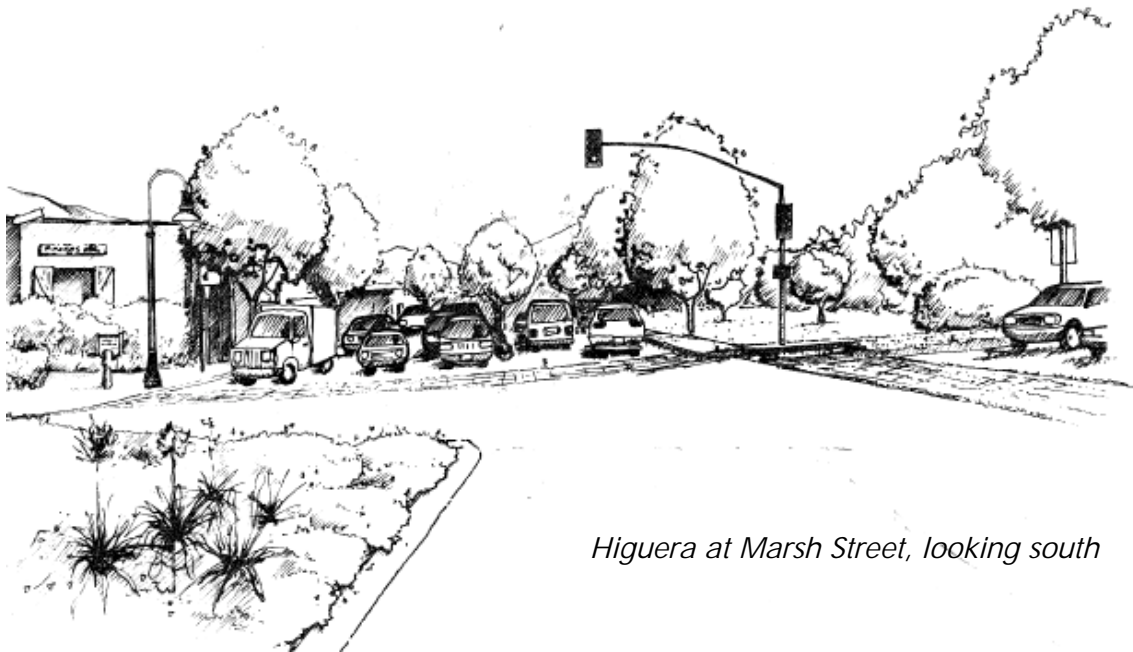
The General Plan Vision

The General Plan Land Use Element (LUE) identifies this as one of several areas where commercial, residential, open space and public uses can be interwoven to create a unique neighborhood. It envisions a new mix of uses, revitalized through innovative physical design solutions, reduced frequency and intensity of flooding, enhanced land use compatibility, improved vehicle and pedestrian circulation, rehabilitated historic buildings, and architecturally enhanced streets and buildings.

The LUE encourages the enhancement of underutilized commercial land in this area and designates the Mid-Higuera corridor as an "Optional Use and Special Design" district to help achieve this and other community goals. To help shape and realize the vision, the General Plan directs the City to prepare a plan...

"showing any desired street and driveway changes, flood mitigation measures, and opportunities for a linear park along San Luis Obispo Creek. The plan could also ... [guide] private construction on sites affected by any widening of Higuera Street or San Luis Obispo Creek."

[Land Use Element
General Plan Digest
Policy LU 8.5]



Higuera at Marsh Street, looking south



ENHANCEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

The City Council adopted several objectives for the Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan:

- Improved circulation for cars, bicycles and pedestrians.
- Expanded opportunities for retail and office uses which take advantage of the area's location while minimizing competition with downtown retailing.
- Increased sales tax (and other) revenues.
- Improved land use compatibility between neighboring uses.
- Reduced flood hazards.
- Restored San Luis Obispo Creek with expanded opportunities for passive recreation.
- Preservation of the area's historic resources and scenic viewshed of the Morros.
- More attractive streetscape through public area improvements, landscaping and building façade improvements, new signage, public art and utility undergrounding.
- Preparation of design guidelines for future development.
- Preparation of an implementation strategy addressing the timing, integration, cost, funding and priority of improvements.

In addition, the plan aims to achieve the following:

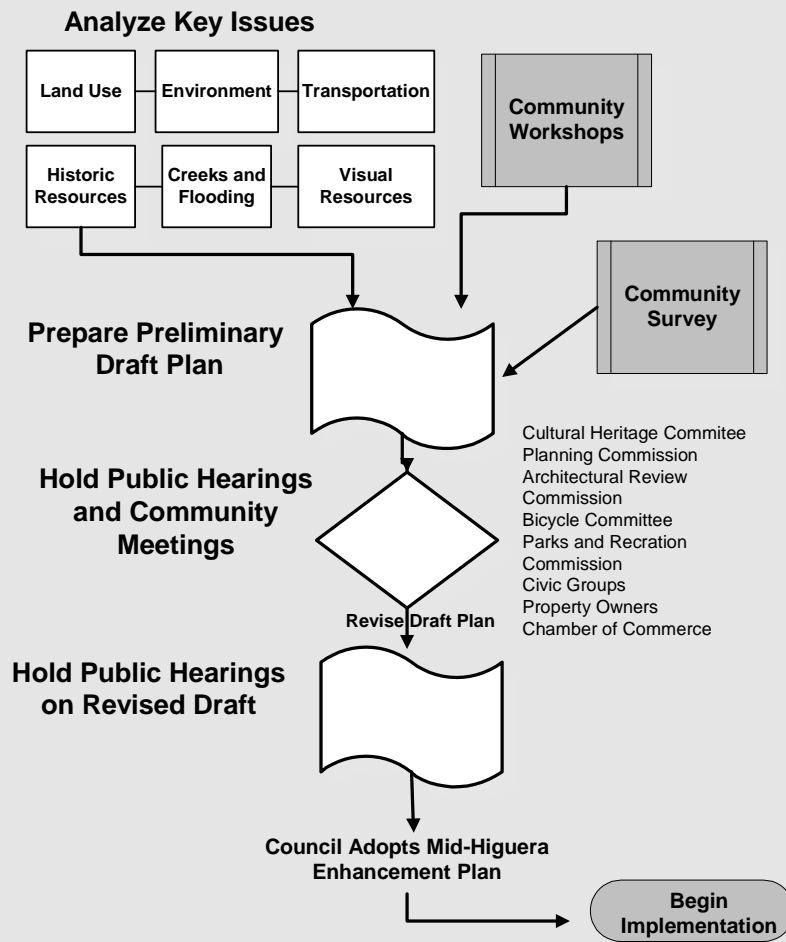
- To preserve and to utilize the area immediately adjacent to the creek for public use and benefit.
- To create opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle paths along the creek.
- To use the creek area as an amenity in the future use and design of private developments along the creek.
- To encourage compatible and appropriate mixed-uses, including dwellings, within commercial areas.



PLANNING PROCESS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Comments received from community workshops, surveys and public hearings were evaluated, and in some cases, became the subject of more detailed studies. Flooding, alternative bikeway locations, landscaped street medians and driveway access were controversial and required further study. Staff prepared and distributed four "white papers" to explain the main planning issues, alternatives and recommendations in the Plan. As diagrammed below, a Council Hearing Draft was prepared, incorporating responses to the many public comments received. Following public hearings, the draft was adopted by the City Council on March 20, 2001.

Figure 10
Planning Process



PLANNING PROCESS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Background Information. Planning for the Mid-Higuera Street area began with a review of relevant City policies, expected public improvements, the biological and flooding characteristics of San Luis Obispo Creek, the area's history, visual resources, circulation, utilities and land use. The results are summarized in the Plan's background report and special studies, a separate document available at the Community Development Department.

Public Workshops and Opinion Surveys. While the planning team gathered the technical information, it also held two public workshops to listen to concerns and ideas from the community. The workshops were held at the Centerpoint Theatre in the plan area and were well-attended. After both workshops, follow-up letters recapping the results of the meetings were sent to all participants and to others on the mailing list.



The consensus after the second workshop was for the planning team to refine the ideas discussed at the two meetings and to illustrate them on a conceptual plan. At the same time, the consultants surveyed property-owners, business owners and residents in and near Mid-Higuera. The results of the surveys are analyzed in the Plan's background report. Some of the key results are highlighted on the next page.

City Council Subcommittee. Using the technical data and ideas from the workshops, the consultants developed an initial conceptual draft of the Enhancement Plan. The City Council then appointed a subcommittee of Councilmembers Dave Romero and Ken Schwartz to help work on the evolving plan. In a series of meetings, the subcommittee, consultants and staff explored numerous alternatives for resolving issues and for best realizing the many objectives of the plan. This work resulted in a refined concept plan.

Follow-up Workshop. The public was then invited to another workshop to review the concept. The meeting, held this time at City Hall, was again well-attended. Input from the participants was largely favorable. Consequently, the consultants turned the concept into a public draft plan,



with maps and accompanying text and illustrations, which was formally presented to the Cultural Heritage Committee, Parks and Recreation Commission, Architectural Review Commission, Planning Commission, and City Council at public hearings.

Selected Workshop Results

At one workshop, participants were asked to vote on which issues were high priority (each person could cast up to five votes, distributed to one or more of the listed issues). The highest vote-getters were:

- Flood control
- Widening Higuera Street
- Allowing residences
- Beautification of Parker Street
- Re-routing bike lanes on Higuera
- Allowing offices

Selected Survey Results

Important Neighborhood Amenities	
✓ Good Neighbors	78%
✓ Availability of Parking	73%
✓ Low Cost	69%
✓ Near Downtown	59%
✓ Near Transportation	58%
✓ Unique Character	51%

Additional Uses Favored in Area	
✓ Restaurants	93%
✓ Business Services	92%
✓ Mixed Uses	87%
✓ Retail	85%
✓ Tourist Services	76%
✓ Parks and Open Space	68%
✓ Light Industry	64%
✓ Creek Access	64%
✓ Commercial w/Residences	59%
✓ Performing Arts Venue	54%

Important Potential Problems	
✓ Crime	91%
✓ Poor Appearance	90%
✓ Flooding	85%
✓ Traffic	79%
✓ Parking	73%
✓ Creek Bank Erosion	66%
✓ Noise	65%

Access and Traffic Questions	
✓ Support a Creekside Path	68%
✓ Slowing Traffic on Higuera	62%
✓ Widening Higuera	60%



Key Issues

Several issues are especially important to the plan:



Marsh Street Bridge, January 18, 1973



Higuera at South Street

Intersection Improvements

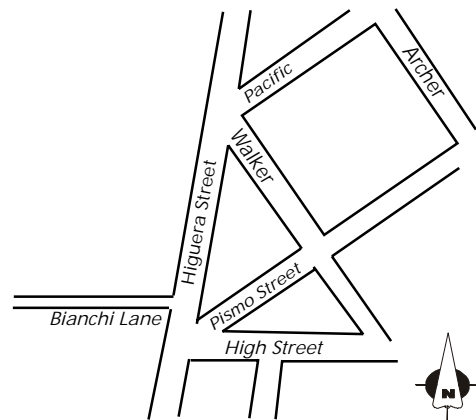
The “Old Town” street pattern presents several awkward intersections and short street segments in the area between High and Marsh Streets, as shown in Figure 11. The plan suggests some alterations to the intersections to improve function and safety.

Flooding

Flooding concerns many residents, business owners and property owners. Flood-related problems include: capacity constraints at the Marsh Street bridge and upstream of the bridge causing periodic back-ups and on-street flows; capacity limits in the creek itself between Marsh and Madonna; and problems with the drainage system conveying run off from the Bridge Street and Meadow Park area that contribute to flooding in the cemetery and along Higuera south of Bridge Street. The plan discusses ways to help reduce flood hazards.

Higuera Street Widening

The City has long planned for the widening of Higuera Street in this area, bringing this important thoroughfare to four lanes (including bike lanes with left turn lanes in key locations) up to the Marsh Street intersection. This project will require the acquisition of property on the west side of the street and the modification, removal or relocation of some buildings, mobile homes and other improvements that encroach into the planned right-of-way. The Enhancement Plan incorporates the widening and views it not only as a circulation improvement, but also as an opportunity to beautify this important streetscape.



*Figure 11
Existing Diagonal Street Grid*





Higuera Street

Parker Street

Parker Street, which parallels Higuera Street, was developed to old City standards for “industrial” area streets. It generally lacks curbs, gutters, sidewalks and street trees. An obvious opportunity exists to upgrade this right-of-way to be more attractive, safe, and functional.



SLO Creek from Marsh Street Bridge

Street Beautification

This area links the City’s historic downtown with other major retailing centers on Madonna Road. It lies between two key freeway interchanges. Yet despite its importance to the City, the area’s streets present several unattractive features including overhead utilities, billboards, and large paved areas unrelieved by landscaping. In addition, some private buildings would benefit from improved maintenance or remodeling. The plan suggests undergrounding utilities, an upgraded streetscape, and design guidelines for future development.



Parker Street at South Street

Seeing the Creek as an Amenity

Until the mid-1990s, San Luis Obispo Creek in the Mid-Higuera reach was largely hidden between the freeway and private development. The City’s acquisition of parcels on the eastern bank near Marsh Street now provides a public open space from which the riparian habitat can be appreciated. The City also owns large parcels on the west side of the creek. The Plan envisions expansion of this public ownership, improvements to the natural habitat value, and increased opportunities for public access and passive recreation.





CalTrans - Higuera Street at Madonna Road

The Future of CalTrans Properties

The State of California owns two of the largest parcels in the plan area. They straddle a key gateway to the City, have good freeway access, and include stretches of San Luis Obispo Creek. The plan envisions important new uses for these properties, namely, new visitor-serving facilities, housing and a public park, if CalTrans were to move. In 2000, CalTrans was studying its facility needs and the feasibility/desirability of relocating some or all of its Mid-Higuera facilities.

The Mobile Home Parks

The two mobile home parks in the plan area provide low cost housing. Any proposal for new uses on those sites must comply with State laws and, perhaps more importantly, must ensure that residents have safe and affordable housing alternatives.



Matthew's Trailer Park



Brook Street Homes

The Brook Street Neighborhood

This small, mixed-use neighborhood was once the heart of the largest Japanese-American settlement in San Luis Obispo. The small houses on both sides of Brook Street are legal, non-conforming uses and would gradually be phased out under previous land use policies. A church at the end of Brook Street partially extends into the right-of-way. Retaining housing and mixed uses was deemed important, however, by many residents in the Enhancement Plan area.

Land Use

Most of the Mid-Higuera area is zoned "C-S" or "Commercial-Service." This zone allows light-industrial and service-oriented commercial uses such as auto repair and some retail uses needing large areas for display and sales, such as lumberyards, ice manufacturing, auto and home appliance sales. Today, the relatively small, unusually-shaped lots, and citywide land use changes and trends make these types of uses less appropriate today for the Mid-Higuera district.



The General Plan envisions a new mix of uses in the Mid-Higuera area. The Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan describes a “long-range vision” for this area, one aspect of which is the addition of parks, offices, retail shops, housing and new visitor-serving/conference facilities. The Plan is a “tool” which, in partnership with area property owners, residents and citizens, can help make that vision a reality.

Parking

The current availability of parking was cited at the workshops and in the surveys as an important feature of the plan area. A parcel-by-parcel analysis, however, revealed that while there appears to be ample parking in the plan area overall, certain properties and subareas are “underparked.” New development will be required to provide parking pursuant to current standards. Flexibility in how parking can be provided (in terms of location and method for calculating parking requirements), therefore, will be helpful in encouraging new investment on certain parcels. Some parking lots do not meet current standards for layout and design, resulting in a potential development constraint. Future projects will be required to upgrade to these standards. The Plan recommends several techniques for increasing parking availability, including acquisition of property for public parking lots.



Trader Joe's from Parker Street

Historic Resources

Residents and property owners have described the neighborhood character as “funky,” due in part to the mix of building styles dating from the late 1800s to the 1980s. The area’s early importance as the center for the Pacific Coast Railway contributed to its eclectic architectural character. Several of the area’s buildings are listed on the City’s Master List of Historic Resources and one is on the National Register of Historic Places. These resources serve not only as a remembrance of times past, but as a guide for designing new development projects. The Plan includes preservation policies and architectural design guidelines to ensure important cultural resources are preserved, and that the scale and design of new buildings complements the area’s existing architectural character.



Craftsman bungalow at 292 Higuera Street



FLOOD HAZARD MITIGATION

Many participants at the public workshops considered flood hazard mitigation issues the highest priority for the Enhancement Plan. The Mid-Higuera area lies in the recognized flood hazard zone of San Luis Obispo Creek. Short-term, minor flooding is common on some of the streets and private properties. Occasionally, the flooding is severe enough to stop traffic and cause substantial property damage. The causes of flooding, however, are complex — and, in large measure, lie outside of the Enhancement Plan area itself.

Capacity problems

The capacity of San Luis Obispo Creek just upstream of the Marsh Street bridge is constricted in several places. Thus, even in relatively frequent conditions (estimated to be about a “10-year” storm and runoff event*), the creek overflows its banks at one or more locations upstream of the Marsh/Higuera streets intersection. Downstream of the intersection, the capacity of the creek is estimated to be substantially greater than that needed to accommodate a 10-year storm. Thus, floodwater leaving the banks above the Marsh Street bridge tries to re-enter the creek channel below the bridge in the Mid-Higuera area by flowing through the streets and over private properties along the creek. The most frequent flooding problem is not due to creek flow capacity within the area, but is caused mainly by upstream constrictions.

The capacity of the creek in the Mid-Higuera area, while greater than that of the reach just upstream of the bridge, is still considerably less than that of the creek channels and undercity culvert in the Downtown upstream of Nipomo Street. Thus, even in situations where the core of Downtown is spared from severe flooding, inundation can still occur between Marsh Street and Madonna Road.

In the so-called 100-year flood event, much of the Downtown and virtually all of Mid-Higuera would be impacted. During these relatively rare events, there is little the City can do in the Mid-Higuera area alone to alleviate widespread flooding. The City’s approach has been to focus on minimizing damage in these cases through such measures as requiring buildings to be “flood-proofed”, requiring flood insurance and by requiring that habitable portions of buildings be designed to be above the projected flood levels to meet FEMA regulations.

Drainage studies and policies

The flood issues in the Mid-Higuera area are part of a much larger regional problem involving the creek and its watershed. In 1999, the City embarked on Phase 2 of its Creek Management Plan. This work will first entail detailed engineering analyses which are expected to lead to new policies to reduce flood damage and recommended improvements to

*A condition expected to occur on average once every 10-years.

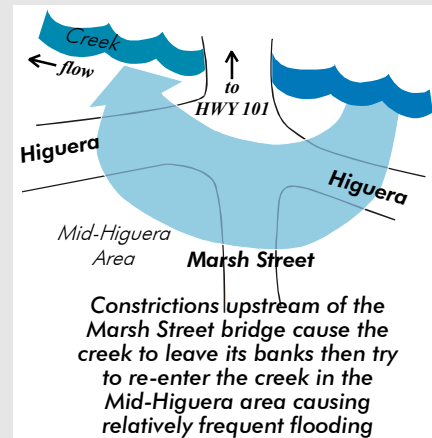
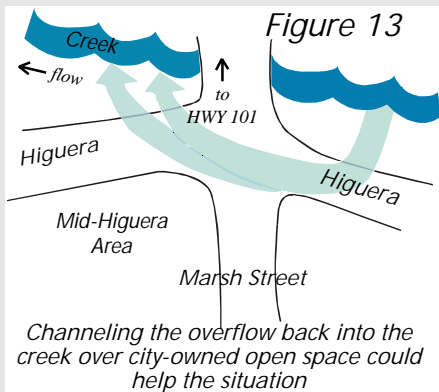


Figure 12



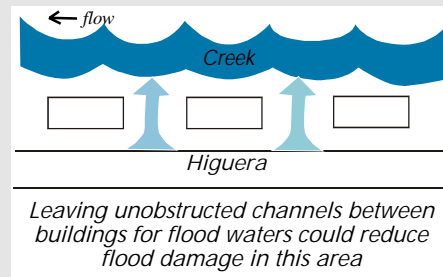
the storm drainage system. The work must be regional in scope and will include the Mid-Higuera area.



Reducing potential flood damage. As discussed above, the most common flooding occurs when the creek overflows upstream of the Marsh Street bridge then re-enters the creek through the Mid-Higuera area after flowing through the streets and over private properties. One idea for mitigating this problem is to channel the floodwaters over the City owned open space near the corner of Higuera and Marsh just below the Marsh Street bridge. The Enhancement Plan calls for the expansion of the existing public ownership in this area. It may be possible to redirect flows back into the creek over this property through grading and curb design modifications, so that more water can re-enter the creek here, before it affects private properties farther downstream.

Figure 14

In addition, new private development between Higuera Street and the creek should be designed with unobstructed flow channels between buildings, so that water can quickly reach the creek while minimizing damage.



Leaving unobstructed channels between buildings for flood waters could reduce flood damage in this area

Furthermore, new development should be designed so that the present amount of lot coverage by structures is not increased, and if possible, even reduced. Less lot coverage allows floodwaters to reenter the creek with less property damage. This can be accomplished, for example, by "going up," replacing single story buildings with 2 or 3 story buildings with smaller footprints. These site design improvements are incorporated into the Design Guidelines for the Mid-Higuera area.

Other mitigation measures

Several other ideas have been discussed to help with flood hazard mitigation in the Mid-Higuera area. These will be evaluated in more detail during the Phase 2 Waterways Management Plan, with plan completion expected by 2002.

Increasing capacity immediately upstream. If constrictions above the Marsh Street bridge were relieved, flooding in the Mid-Higuera area would be less frequent. The area between Marsh and Nipomo Streets, however is largely urbanized and in most places there is little room for creek widening. Furthermore, and perhaps more significantly, awareness of the environmental value of creekways has made widening less attractive from a public policy perspective and less feasible from a regulatory standpoint.



Increasing capacity of the Marsh Street bridge. Some observers believe that during flooding, the Marsh Street bridge itself (and not upstream constrictions) limits the creek flow forcing the water over the banks and onto the streets. Some believe this has occurred only when substantial debris or other large objects get caught in the bridge, damming normal flows. Regardless, it is apparent that rocks and gravel have been deposited below the bridge reducing its capacity to some extent. Regulatory restrictions make deposition removal difficult. Thus, to many people, increasing the capacity of the Marsh Street bridge is an important flood hazard mitigation measure. Rebuilding this bridge would be very costly, however. The design would have to ensure that the freeway ramps that run over the bridge remain safe and functional and that the bridge still ties back to the street-level at the intersection of Marsh and Higuera Streets.

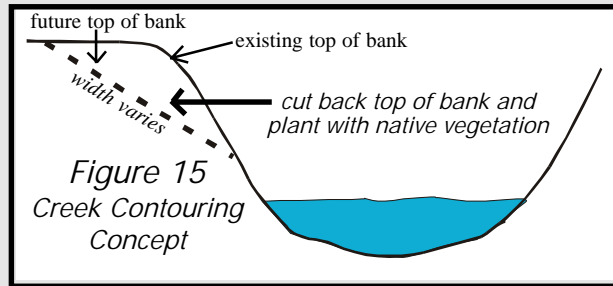
Bypass channel. Another idea for increasing the floodway capacity in the Mid-Higuera area is to create a bypass channel on public property between the creek and the freeway. The channel would be higher in elevation than the main creek bottom so that it would carry water only when the flow rises above normal. In effect, the channel functions like a creek widening – it increases the overall capacity for accommodating floodwater. The principal advantage to the bypass channel over widening is that this approach avoids most of the physical changes to the creek, thereby minimizing environmental disruptions. There are some significant issues, however, that require further analysis. First, downstream capacities need to be assessed (an increase in this reach may not alleviate flooding in the Mid-Higuera area if the capacity just downstream is constrained). Second, in some places, there is little room between the creek and the freeway for a channel. In these places, the creek itself would need to be widened – and subject to the same public policy and regulatory constraints noted earlier. Third, the cost of constructing and then maintaining the channel must be compared to the benefits to be realized and to other alternatives for flood hazard mitigations. The bypass option will be investigated in the Phase 2 of the San Luis Obispo Waterway Management Plan.

Flood terraces. Another way of increasing flood capacity is to create an area adjacent to the creek lower than Higuera Street that can serve as a “flood terrace” during flood events. Such a terrace would be kept free of significant buildings so that it could be inundated during floods with little damage to property and perhaps even enhancing riparian habitat value. A potential difficulty with this approach is coordination with upstream and downstream capacities, since requiring a terrace in a small area may not be effective if significant capacity problems remain elsewhere. The other major problem is cost. A terrace between Higuera and the creek would almost certainly require the public purchase of land or an easement on private property. The cost could be substantial and must be weighed against potential benefits and alternatives. This idea will also be evaluated in Phase 2 of the San Luis Obispo Waterway Management Plan.

Cutting back creek banks. Another idea is to cut back the tops of the creek bank at a slope. This increases overall capacity of the creekway. The cut back area could be planted

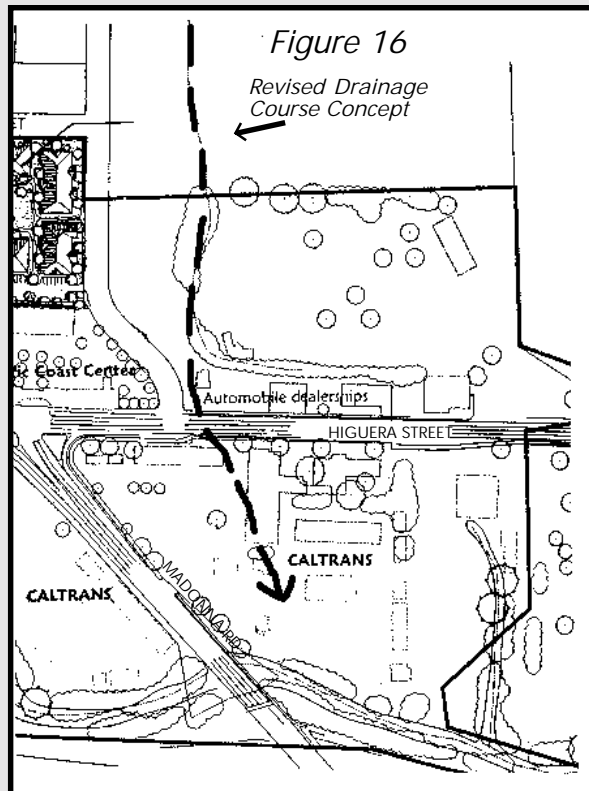


with native riparian vegetation, thereby increasing the overall habitat value. In some areas, this would involve removal of relatively recent fill material to expose creekbanks as they existed in the early 1900s.



Meadow Creek

In addition to problems with San Luis Obispo Creek, a portion of the plan area floods due to problems with the Meadow Creek/South Street channel. Water flowing west toward San Luis Obispo Creek becomes constrained because of alignment problems and culvert capacity limitations, resulting in inundation around the intersection of Higuera and Bridge Streets and in the Old Mission Cemetery. The likely solution is to realign the drainage system south of Bridge Street through the CalTrans property to a new inlet in San Luis Obispo Creek south of Madonna Road. Larger culverts under Higuera Street may be required as well.



Redevelopment of the CalTrans property must accommodate an improved drainage system. The best route and design must be based on an engineering analysis



ISSUE CLOSE UP: MOBILEHOME PARK - OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

The Village Mobile Home Park, located between South and Bridge Streets at Beebee Street, is appropriate for redevelopment due to its age and current zoning. This park was once the "Sleep Off the Highway" motel and trailer court in the 1920's. Today, it is the site of about 70 residences, a mix of mobile homes and motel units converted to apartments. The site is on approximately 5.4 acres and is zoned R-3, planned development "Medium High Density Residential," allowing significantly more dwellings than existing in 1999. Under the Mid-Higuera Plan, the property is designated for high-density residential use and will be rezoned to R-4.

Earlier proposal. In the early 1990s, the property owners proposed a phased conversion of the park to residential condominiums. The property owners offered to purchase the mobile homes in the park, and many mobile home owners took advantage of this option. Thus, today, many of the mobile homes are actually owned by the underlying property owners. Residents were also given special priority for purchasing the new condominiums. The phased approach



Earlier proposal for multi-family housing on this site.

to the redevelopment ensured that no mobile home owner would be forced to relocate, but through attrition the mobile home units would be gradually converted into condominiums meeting contemporary development standards. This proposal was approved by the City. However, the slow real estate market at that time prevented the project from proceeding.

Continued interest in redevelopment; relocation option for mobile home park residents. The site is a good location for high-density residential uses, either condominiums or apartments, or some combination of both. It is large enough to accommodate this kind of use, and is near transportation routes, shopping, jobs, and recreation opportunities. As in the earlier proposal, care must be taken so that the existing residents have reasonable housing alternatives and/or relocation assistance.

Discussions with the property owners and with the staff of the San Luis Obispo Housing Authority suggest a shared interest in redeveloping the property with higher density attached units. At least a portion of these units could be earmarked for low and moderate income households and for residents of the mobile home parks in the Mid-Higuera area.

Density bonus for affordable housing; PD zoning. The R-4 designation allows up to 24 units per acre; thus, the site would allow up to about 130 two-bedroom units. The City also grants density bonuses for affordable housing, which could increase the permitted number of dwelling units to about 162. The City affords designers flexibility through the "PD" or "Planned Development" option which allows the relaxation of certain development standards in recognition of extraordinary project benefits that might not be realized under conventional development standards.



In this case, the use of a PD to allow for design flexibility would be appropriate if the project provides exceptional affordable housing, architectural design, recreational amenities, and other benefits such as relocation opportunities for mobile home park residents.

Visitor-serving uses along the South Street frontage. The Enhancement Plan envisions the eventual development of tourist-related uses on the CalTrans property south of Madonna Road. The plan also allows for the possibility of extending those uses across Higuera Street and up South Street to Beebee Street, if the demand for such uses grows in the future. Another option for this site is a mix of uses that could include a combination of medium-high or high-density apartments facing Bridge Street and the South Street hills with visitor accommodations oriented toward South Street. The visitor uses could act as a buffer between South Street and the residences on the interior of the property.

Protections for Mobile Home Park Residents. State law provides special protection for mobile home owners when mobile home parks are converted to new uses. Key provisions are summarized below. The Enhancement Plan includes a policy that no conversion may occur without a plan for reasonable relocation options approved by the City Council.

Summary of the State laws governing mobilehome park conversion:

- ✓ A person or entity proposing to convert a mobilehome park to another use must follow the requirements of the state *Planning and Zoning Law* §§ 65863.7, 65863.8. This law mandates, among other things, that a report must be generated which analyzes the potential impact of the conversion, closure, or cessation of use upon the displaced residents, as well as the availability of adequate replacement housing in other mobilehome parks, including relocation costs. Planning and Zoning Law §65863.7(a).
- ✓ Under the above requirement, the applicant may be required, as a condition of approval, to mitigate any adverse impact of the conversion on the ability of displaced mobilehome park residents to find adequate housing in another mobilehome park. Planning and Zoning Law §65863.7(e).
- ✓ These requirements apply where the closure, cessation, or change of use is the result of a decision by a local governmental entity or planning agency not to renew a conditional use permit or zoning variance under which the mobilehome park has operated. Planning and Zoning Law §65863.7(i).
- ✓ A person or entity proposing to convert a mobilehome park to another use through subdivision must follow the requirements of the state *Subdivision Map Act* §§ 66427.4, 66427.5. This law mandates, among other things, that the subdivider shall file a report on the impact of the conversion upon the displaced residents of that mobilehome park. This report shall address the availability of adequate replacement space in mobilehome parks. Subdivision Map Act §66427.4(a).
- ✓ No action by the responsible local review agency in response to the above proposals will be taken until the applicant for such a change has satisfied all resident notification requirements, as mandated under the *Mobilehome Residency Law* located at California Civil Code § 798.



APPRECIATING THE PAST

The area's architectural character -- and to a lesser extent, its current mix of uses -- reflect an interesting history, strongly linked with the City's railroad heritage.

Pacific Coast Railway Yards

In 1876 the San Luis Obispo and Santa Maria railroad was completed between Port San Luis and the City. This route later became the Pacific Coast Railroad, a narrow gauge line that served the Central Coast from Los Olivos to San Luis Obispo, with a spur to Port Harford, now called Port San Luis.

One of the original buildings was a long warehouse for Schwartz, Harford & Company. This building, erected in 1876, was used to load beans and other commodities on the rail cars for shipment to the Port. This warehouse was later owned by Loomis and Sons, and was commonly referred to as the "Loomis Building." The original brick foundation has been preserved along the lower façade of the Pacific Coast Center, located on Higuera Street at its intersection with Madonna Road. The present building, constructed in 1989, has a footprint similar to its historic predecessor and the small windows, gray metal siding, interior wooden superstructure and overall shape recall the historic industrial building it replaced.

The entire block bounded by Higuera, Beebee, South and High Streets was occupied by lumber and mill yards served by the railroad. Originally, this complex was the San Luis Lumber Company, later to become the Pacific Coastal Coal Company's lumberyard. Today, Parker Street runs through the center of this historic lumberyard. Some of the old, long, low buildings echo this history.

The railroad and lumber operations encouraged other small-scale industrialization nearby. On the west side of Higuera Street, the Smith and Waites Planing Mill and Machine Shop was established in 1883. One of these buildings remains on the site of Hayward Lumber.



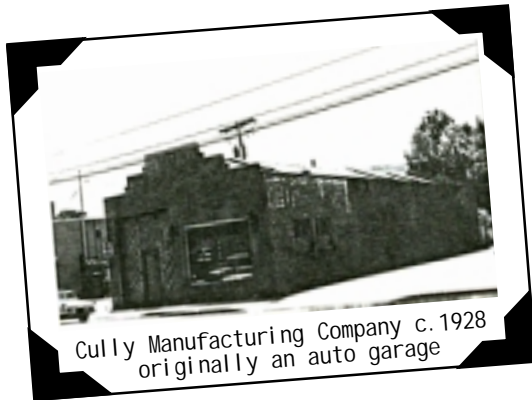
Pacific Coast Railroad Warehouse



Original Brick Foundation



San Luis Lumber Company



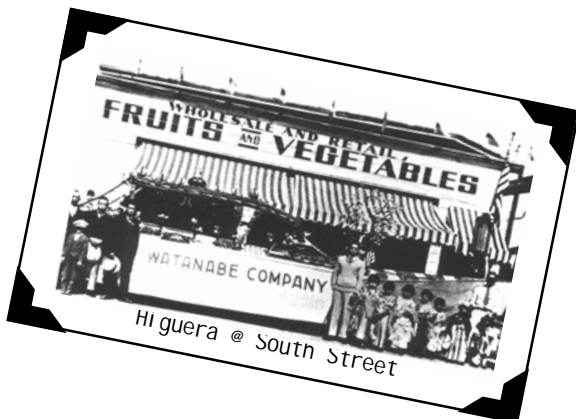
Other existing commercial uses such the welding shop, ice plant, and lumberyard recall the area's railroad industrial past. As noted above, this history can be seen in some of the existing buildings, notably the reconstructed Loomis Building in the Pacific Coast Center and The Mill at Hayward Lumber.

The Old Highway and Remnant Auto Courts

In addition to the narrow-gauge railroad, Higuera Street itself served as a major thoroughfare. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, blacksmith shops and other services located along Higuera Street to serve the horse and horse-drawn wagon trades. Later, as the automobile replaced horses, many of the old horse-oriented shops simply became automotive repair shops. Today, the area still serves as an automobile repair and service district. Other travel-oriented uses such as service stations, lunch stands, motels and auto courts lined the streets by the 1920s.



This highway-oriented past is still visible in many of the uses and buildings in the Mid-Higuera area. For example, the mobile home park on South Street is the old "Sleep Off the Highway Motor Lodge." The Matthews Trailer Park on Higuera Street near High Street was originally a tourist camp for travel trailers in the 1940s. Many existing buildings were originally service stations, such as the carpet store on the corner of Walker and Higuera.



Japanese American Community

The west side of Higuera Street, between South Street and Madonna Road was once the center of the Japanese-American community in San Luis Obispo. The focal point of this community was the Pacific Hotel, built for R. F. Fukunaga in 1931. The building was on the southwest corner of South and Higuera. Land and buildings in this area continued to be owned by people of Japanese ancestry until 1942 when the Japanese-Americans were relocated to detention camps during World War II.



Resources of Historic, Architectural, or Aesthetic Value

1



Address: 20 Higuera Street
Historic Name: State of California, Division of Highways, Division V
Owner: State of California
Year Built: 1931
Architect: F.W. Dingwell, Division of Architecture, State of California
Builder: H. J. Smith, General Contractor
Architectural Style: Early California/Spanish Colonial Revival
Significant Architectural Features: Excellent tilework and employment of traditional Spanish details

2



Address: 65/65-1/2 Higuera Street
Historic Name: Warehouse for the Pacific Coast Railway Company
Owner: Rossi Enterprises
Year Built: Original building was built in 1876, remodeled in 1988
Significant Architectural Features: Its association with the narrow gauge railway is the most significant historic feature; its original brick foundation is intact.
Architectural Style: Railroad Vernacular

3



Address: 236 Higuera Street
Historic Name: Smith and Waites Planing Mill and Machine Shop
Owner: Hayward Lumber
Year Built: Pre-1877
Significant Architectural Features: Excellent example of an early wood industrial mill building.
Architectural Style: Falsefront Pioneer

4



Address: 296 Higuera Street
Owner: B. O'Conner
Year Built: c. 1880
Architectural Style: Italianate with Eastlake details
Significant Architectural Features: Well preserved front porch

5



Address: 303 Higuera Street
Historic Name: A. Savers Wholesale Co.
Owner: G. Schifano
Year Built: 1923
Architectural Style: Spanish Colonial Revival
Significant Architectural Features: One of the most important examples of Spanish Colonial Revival on this section of Higuera Street



Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan

6



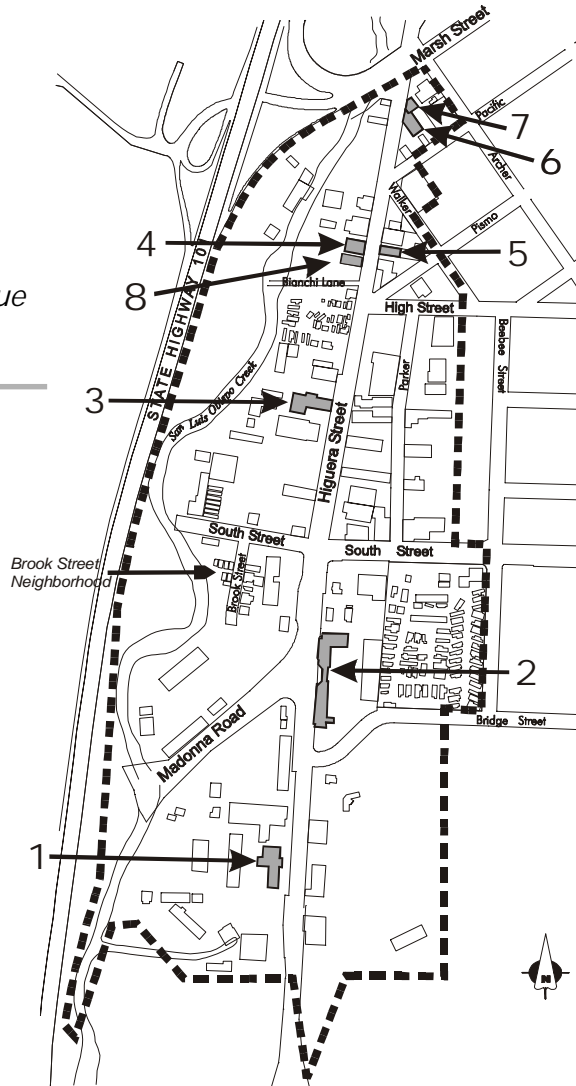
Address: 341 Higuera Street
 Historic Name: Garden Dairy Building
 Owner: A. D. Cody
 Year Built: 1927
 Architect: Hammin, Grant & Bruner
 Significant Architectural Features: The design of the street facade reflects commercial designs of the years 1905-1915, rather than the 1920s

7



Address: 385 Higuera Street
 Owner: A. J. Bettencourt
 Year Built: 1928
 Architectural Style: Spanish Colonial Revival

*Figure 17
 Buildings of Historic,
 Architectural or Aesthetic Value*



8



Address: 292 Higuera Street
 Owner: B. J. O'Connor
 Year Built: circa 1915
 Architectural Style: Craftsman Bungalow



Mid Higuera Street
Enhancement Plan
Public Policy



PUBLIC POLICY

The City can enhance the Mid-Higuera District through two principal means: public policy such as land use and architectural standards; and public improvements such as street widening, flood protection, street tree planting, and park development. This chapter and the next describe the Enhancement Plan's policies and planned public improvements.

CONFORMANCE WITH THE ENHANCEMENT PLAN

1. Review for Conformance. All new development and land uses in the Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement District shall conform with this plan.

USES OF LAND AND BUILDINGS

2. Allowed land uses. The land uses allowed within the Mid-Higuera District are determined by the Zoning Ordinance, based on the general plan designations applied to properties within the District. The City will amend the General Plan and rezone properties within the District as shown in Figure 18. The proposed rezonings include the following:

- Changing the properties along the west side of Higuera Street, between Marsh Street and Madonna Road, from C-S (Service Commercial) to C-R-MU (Retail Commercial with a Mixed Use overlay);
- Changing the properties along the east side of Higuera from C-S (Service Commercial) to C-S-MU (Service Commercial with a Mixed Use overlay);
- Changing the CalTrans property on the west side of Higuera, south of Madonna Road, from PF (Public Facilities) to C-T-MU (Tourist Commercial with a Mixed Use overlay), and on the north side of Madonna Road from PF to PF, C/OS and C-

R-MU. This is intended to encourage relocation of CalTrans facilities and re-use of the property for open space, tourist-serving and residential uses.

An additional proposed policy would apply to the property designated R-4 at the southwest corner of Beebee and South Street. In the event that the CalTrans property is redeveloped with land uses allowed by the C-T-MU zoning district, and the City determines that additional demand exists for tourist commercial uses, the South Street frontage of the parcel at Beebee and South Streets may be rezoned to C-T-MU.

In the long-term, the Plan also envisions changing the McNamara Realty and Madonna Construction Company properties at the north end of the District from C-S-S (Service Commercial - Special Considerations) to C/OS (Conservation/Open Space) between Highway 101 and San Luis Creek, and from C-S to C/OS between San Luis Creek and Higuera Street.

3. Orient new development to the creek and provide pedestrian access. New development on lots adjacent to San Luis Obispo Creek shall be designed to include orientation to the creek in the form of entries, windows, gardens, plazas, patios or other similar features. As a condition of approval of new development on these sites, the City shall require an offer of dedication for public access easements within the required creek



Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan



Figure 18
Proposed Zoning



setbacks.

4. Creek Setbacks. New development along San Luis Obispo Creek shall provide setbacks pursuant to the Zoning Regulations (generally 20-feet from top of creek bank or edge of creek vegetation, whichever is greater). The City Council approved an exception to the creek setback ordinance to allow a bike path in the creek setback.
5. Provide vehicular access alternatives to Higuera Street. New development in the District should consider providing secondary vehicular access to onsite parking lots from streets or driveways other than Higuera Street. Driveway access to Higuera Street will be restricted to existing right turns in and out and left turns in at mid-block turn pockets.



San Luis Obispo Creek at Bianchi Bridge

6. Private driveway between South Street and Bianchi Lane. New development between South Street and Bianchi Lane, west of Higuera Street, should include a private common driveway or interconnecting parking lots with a minimum access width of 24 feet, that affords reciprocal access to all properties in this area. The loca-

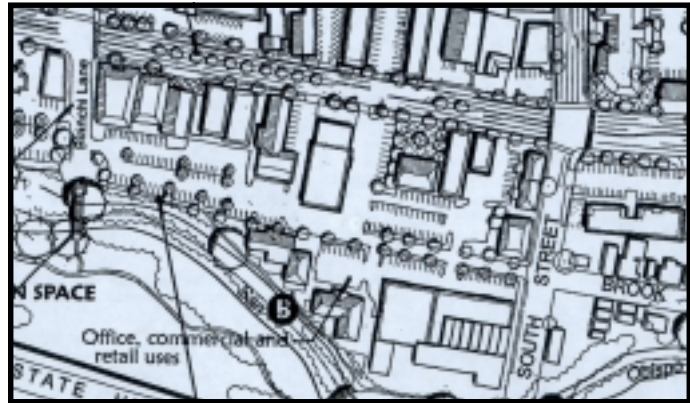


Figure 19

Private common parking and accessway

tion and design of this common drive should be determined prior to approval of redevelopment on these properties, as generally shown in Figure 19. Reciprocal access easements should be considered as a condition of new development.

7. Interior parking, creek and Higuera Street building orientations. New development between South Street and Marsh Street, west of Higuera, should be designed so that on-site parking is accessible from a common private driveway on the interior of the site. Buildings should be designed to orient toward the creek on the west side of the common driveway and toward Higuera Street on the east side of the private driveway, and spaced to allow floodwaters to return freely to the creek.
8. Parker Street findings. In permitting new buildings or uses on the east side of Parker Street that require discretionary review, the approving body (Community Development Director, City commission(s), or City Council) must first find that the project is not likely adversely affect residents living on Beebee



Street due to noise, glare, privacy, odors or other factors.

9. Encouraging reuse of CalTrans properties. The City will encourage the relocation of CalTrans facilities to other sites in the City or within its Urban Reserve and the reuse of the former CalTrans properties in conformance with this plan.
10. Encouraging reuse of the former PG&E utility substation. PG&E no longer needs the substation at Walker and Pacific Streets and plans to remove its facilities. The property will be available for another use. Future uses should be designed to be consistent with the Plan and designed to include the Walker Street pedestrian plaza, and attractive, low screen walls and landscaping to screen parking areas from the street and plaza, pursuant to the design guidelines in this plan.



PG&E Substation at Walker and Pacific Streets

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND AESTHETICS

11. Appreciating the past. For any project that involves the removal, replacement or substantial redevelopment of existing buildings, the City shall require as part of the application materials, a brief history of the site and the buildings, including a list of previous owners and uses, and a photographic record of the building(s). The City may require that the historic building be preserved and rehabilitated rather than removed, and may require the developer to provide a plaque that recalls the property's history, to be incorporated into the design of the project. Alternatively, the project proponent may agree to provide public artwork that commemorates the history of the site and district. The requirement for incorporating a plaque or artwork into the redevelopment may be waived if the Community Development Director determines upon review of the history submitted with the application that the building or site has no significant historical value; the Director may request advice in this determination from the Cultural Heritage Committee.
12. Preserve trees and historic building on CalTrans property. Any redevelopment of the CalTrans property south of Madonna Road shall preserve mature trees and incorporate the historic brick building.
13. Preserve the historic Mill building. Any redevelopment of the Hayward Lumber property shall preserve the historic





Historic CalTrans Building

“Old Mill” building.

MOBILE HOME PARKS AND NEW HOUSING

14. Protection for mobile home owners. To the extent required by State law, the City shall not approve the conversion of the mobile home parks in the district unless a relocation plan is approved by the City Council to assist mobile home residents in finding affordable housing. Elements of such a plan may include, but are not limited to, the following measures: purchase of the units; financial assistance for moving; rental or purchase assistance for alternative housing; the identification of alternative housing options within the same or similar price range within or near the district or in other locations acceptable to residents; or the provision of comparably priced housing in or near the district through the City’s Housing Authority or other housing providers.
15. New multi-family housing in the district. The City shall work with the owners of the property along the west side of Beebee Street, and with the Housing Authority or other housing provider, to develop this site with new multi-family housing. The intent

of this cooperative effort is that a significant percentage of the new units will be affordable to low and moderate income households and/or will provide reasonable relocation options for residents of the district’s two mobile home parks.

The City will consider the provision of affordable housing in excess of any minimum requirements and/or the provision of relocation options for mobile home park residents as a public benefit for purposes of approving a PD, “Planned Development” for this site. Approval of a PD zoning would apply to a specific development plan and could provide added flexibility in development standards to better accommodate a high-density housing project.

PARKING

16. Shared parking reduction allowed. Shared parking is encouraged and the Director may consider a shared parking reduction for district uses, pursuant to Section 17.16.060 of the zoning regulations.
17. Mixed use parking reduction. The Director may consider a mixed-use parking reduction for district uses, pursuant to Section 17.16.060 of the zoning regulations.



Mid Higuera Street
Enhancement Plan
Public Improvements



PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

FLOOD HAZARD REDUCTION

- a. Marsh Street bridge. The City will analyze, and if feasible and desirable, modify or replace the Marsh Street bridge to increase its creekflow capacity, while allowing the grade of the new bridge to align with the Higuera-Marsh intersection.
- b. Bypass channel. The City will analyze, and if feasible and desirable, design and install a bypass/overflow channel parallel to the creek in this reach on the City-owned open space. This channel will replicate, to the extent practical, natural riparian features.
- c. Coordination with other flood planning. Other improvements in the Mid-Higuera area may be required, contingent on the results of a basin-wide analysis of drainage and flooding in the City. Any improvements must be based on and complementary with the City's overall flood management program.

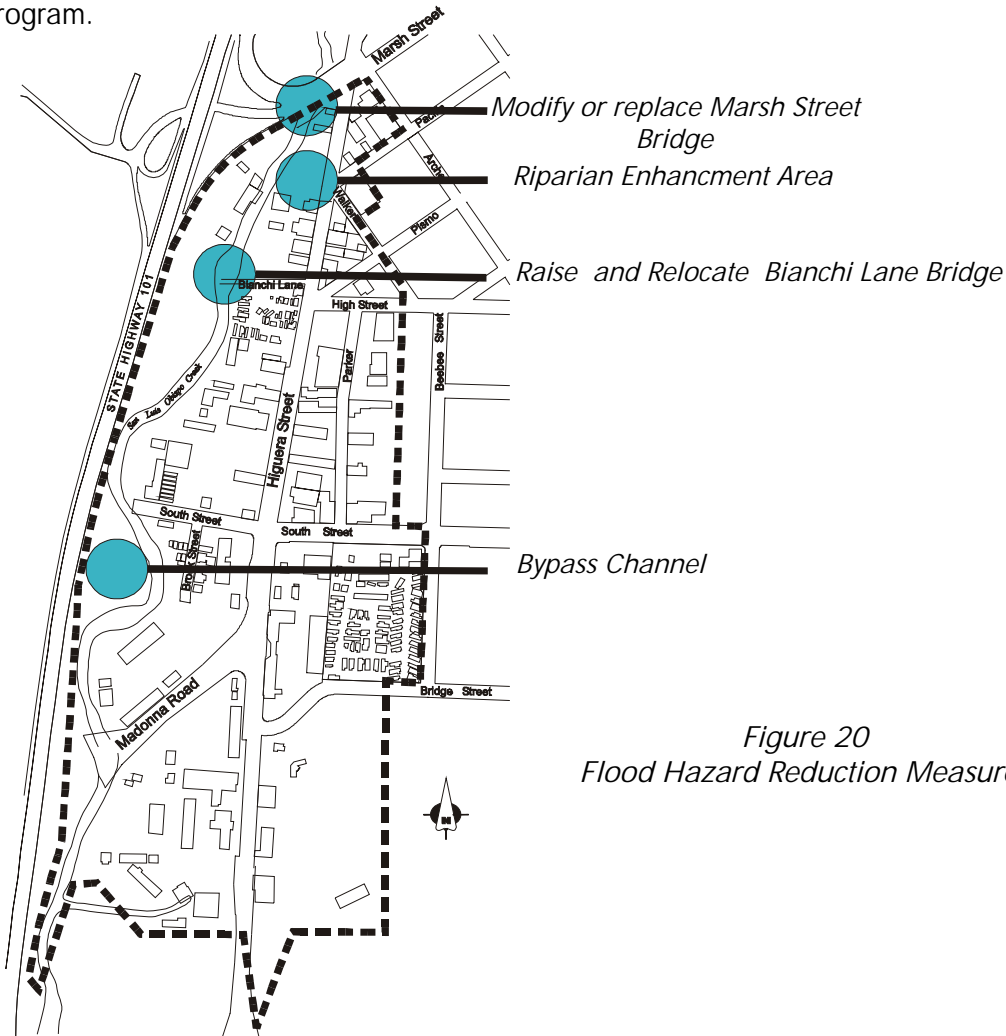


Figure 20
Flood Hazard Reduction Measures

CIRCULATION AND STREET IMPROVEMENTS

- a. Higuera Street widening. Higuera Street will be widened to four lanes for the area shown in Phase 1, Figure 21. The right-of-way will also include bike lanes and a landscaped median with midblock turn lanes. At its intersection with Marsh Street, two dedicated left turn lanes may be designed. To widen the street, 26 feet of additional right-of-way will be needed. This will be taken strictly on the west (freeway) side of Higuera Street. This widening will require modifying, moving or demolishing certain existing buildings, mobile homes and other structures in the planned right-of-way.
- b. Bianchi Lane realignment. Bianchi Lane will be realigned to the south to align with High Street at the traffic signal. This realignment is planned in conjunction with the Higuera widening and designed to minimize impacts to the mobile home park.
- c. Pacific-Higuera-Walker Streets improvements. Walker Street will end in a cul-de-sac near the Pacific Street intersection. Pacific Street will be realigned to a 90 degree approach angle at Higuera, with a northbound right turn lane and a southbound left turn lane. The area that remains from the Walker closure will be landscaped, provided with a pedestrian/emergency access between the blocks, with a mini-plaza as shown in Figure 31.

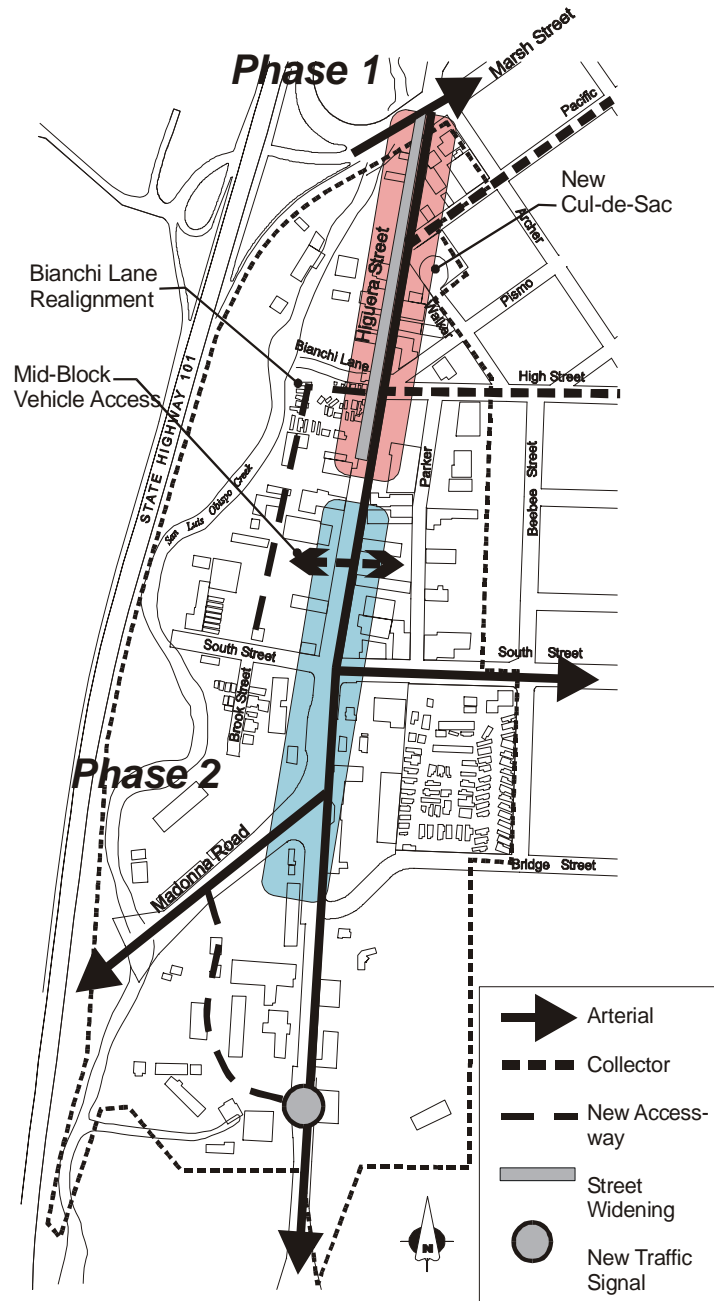


Figure 21
Proposed Street Circulation System

Delivery truck access to adjacent uses will be maintained. The PG& E substation may be developed with commercial uses, or a public parking lot with a landscaped wall provided as a buffer to the street and plaza areas. This street closure and conversion to a public parking plaza reflects the general direction and intent for this part of the Enhancement Plan area as shown in the "Conceptual



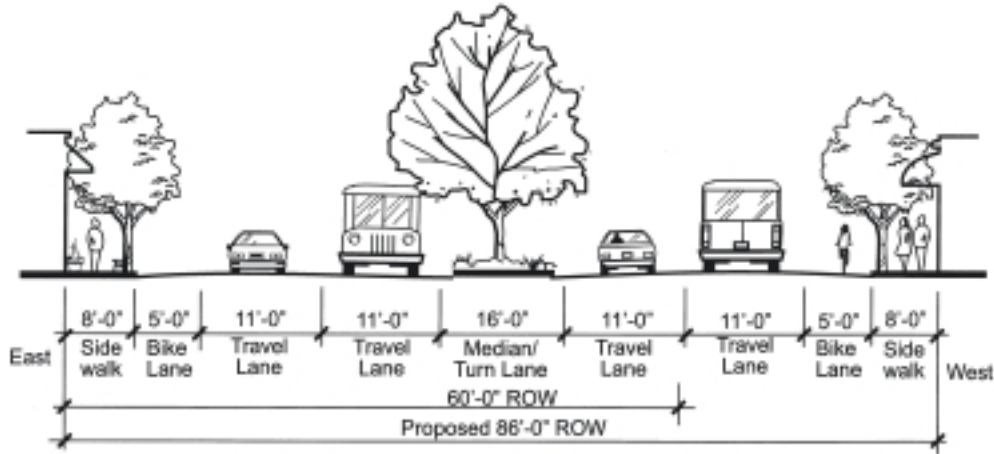


Figure 22
Proposed Higuera Street cross-section, Marsh to High Streets

Physical Plan for the City's Center."

- d. Other streetscape improvements. Parker Street will be improved with curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street trees, benches, and decorative lighting fixtures as suggested in detail C of the Short-Range Concept Plan. Street trees, decorative lighting fixtures and benches will be installed on Higuera Street as shown in the plan, and Madonna Road will have a landscaped median as shown on the Long Term Concept Plan. The City will underground utilities, as feasible, and will seek removal of the billboards in the plan area.
- e. Brook Street extension. Brook Street will be extended to the south when the CalTrans site is redeveloped. This will be a two-lane local street with parking provided on one side and will end in a turnaround. The existing church encroaching into the future right-of-way will need to be modified or relocated to allow the street extension, as shown in the Long-Range Concept Plan. Vehicle access from Brook Street to the park will be for emergency and maintenance access only and may be constructed of turf block or equal.

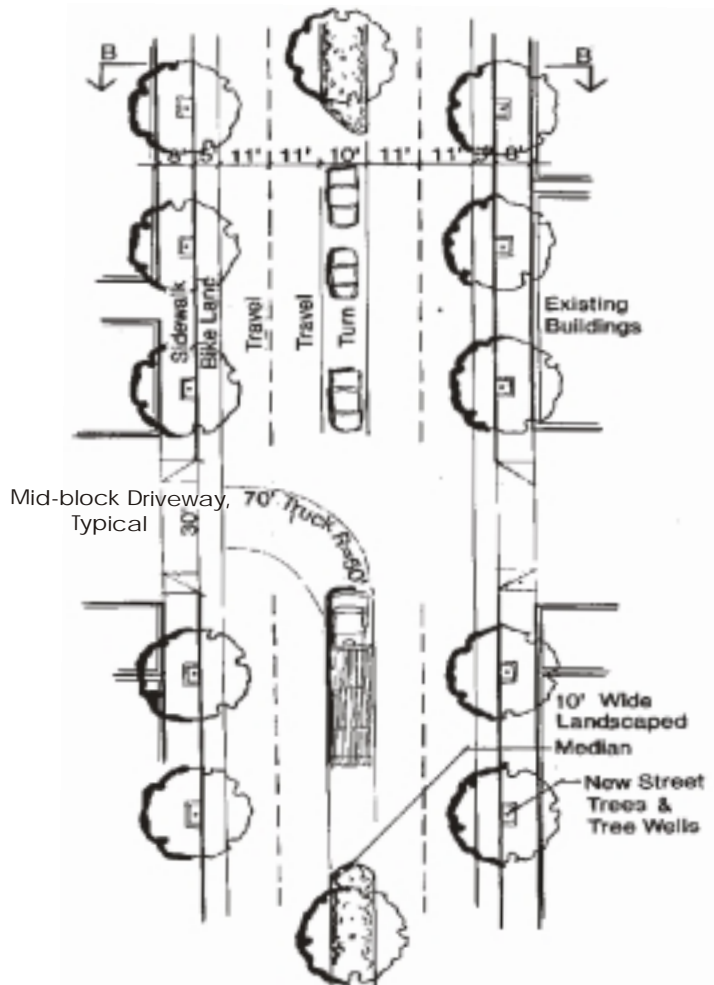


Figure 23
Higuera Street 80' right-of-way
Mid-Block Left Turn Lane,
High Street to Madonna Road

Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan

- Bikelanes
- Bike/Pedestrian Trail
- Pedestrian Ways
- New Pedestrian Bridges

Note:
on-street
bikeway in
this area

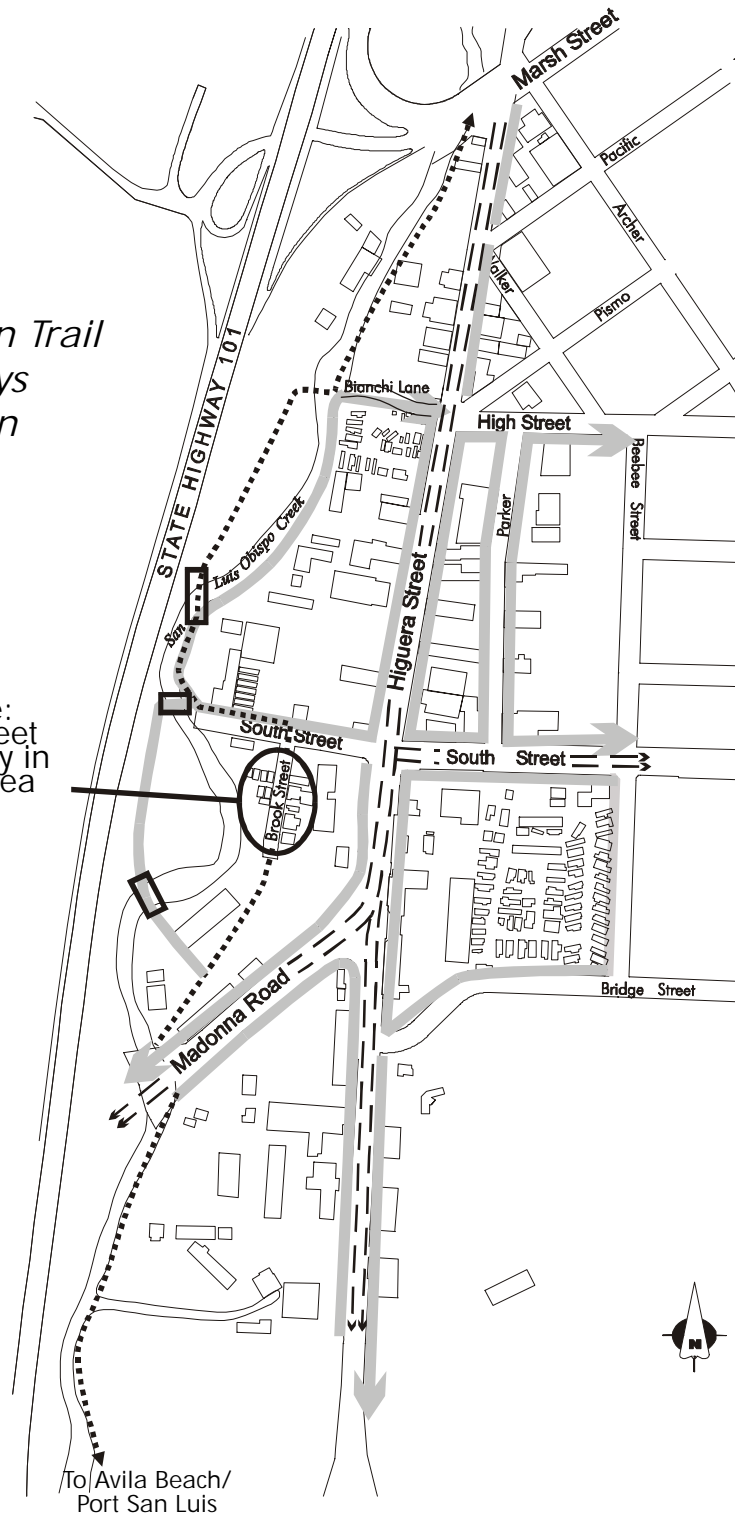


Figure 24
Bike/Pedestrian Circulation





SLO Creek

CREEKSIDE IMPROVEMENTS

a. Creek corridor natural area. San Luis Obispo creek will be restored in this reach to improve natural habitat values by planting native vegetation, controlling erosion, removing exotic plants and by managing public access. The City will acquire privately held land on the freeway side of the creek and convert the entire area, as it becomes available, into a natural area for recreation and open space. Furthermore, the City will analyze, and if feasible and desirable, will engineer the site grading and curb design to encourage flood waters that often accumulate near the Marsh-Higuera Street intersection to flow back into the creek, as shown in Figure 25.

The City will also acquire properties on the east side of the creek between the City-owned open space and the Marsh Street bridge to accommodate Higuera Street widening, secure open space and restore riparian habitat.

b. Bikeway. The City will install a bikeway along San Luis Obispo Creek, on the east side of the creek between Marsh Street and Bianchi Lane; and along the west side, between Bianchi Lane and a point just north of South Street, behind Villa's Automotive. From there, the bikeway will cross San Luis Obispo Creek with a bridge linking the City-owned open space to South Street, as shown in Figure 24. This alignment will provide a scenic, off-street route linking Marsh Street with the planned Gateway Park and the southbound Bob Jones City-to-Sea bike trail.

c. Pedestrian path. The City or private developers will construct a pedestrian path on the east side of the creek, between Bianchi Lane and South Street, as this area redevelops. Ancillary uses such as benches, public art, and interpretive displays may be incorporated into the design of the path. Bridges will be installed along the creek to link the path with public open spaces, as shown in the long-range concept plan.

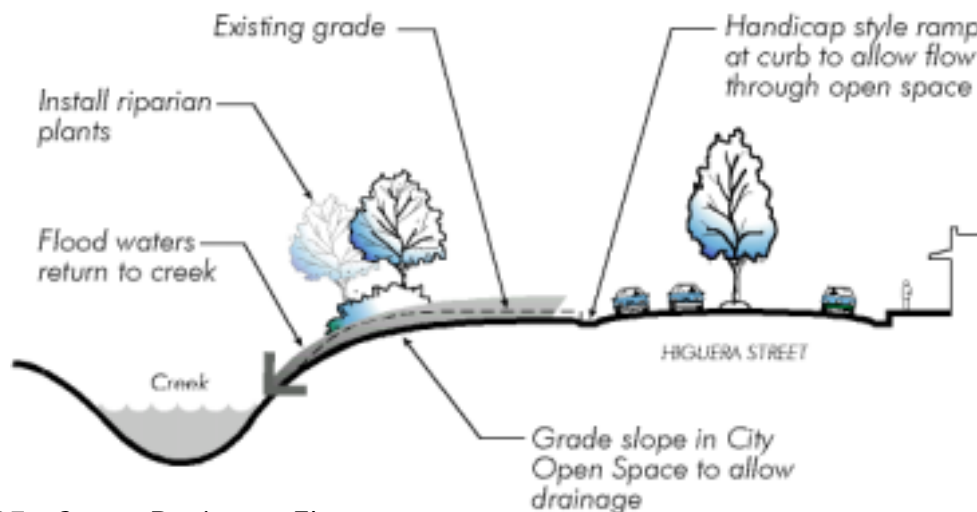


Figure 25: Storm Drainage Flow



Bike Routes Considered

The Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan shows a recommended route for the creek bikeway, however several alternatives were considered before recommending this route. Figure 26 shows the bikeway routes considered. Alternatives utilizing private land would take longer to implement and raise property owner issues. Alternatives using city-owned land pose environmental, safety and flood-related concerns. The Plan recommends the western bikeway alignment, the route shown in blue. While there are “pros and cons” with each alternative, this route is supported by the City’s Bicycle Advisory Committee and could be implemented relatively quickly since the City owns most of the land necessary, except for narrow strip of land behind Villa’s Automotive Repair on South Street. This route will require a bridge spanning San Luis Obispo Creek linking the bikeway with South Street. When installed in connection with future development, the bikeway will increase business activity, provide recreation and improved access, minimize creek disturbance and enhance creek views for employees, customers and



Figure 26
Bike Route Alternatives

visitors. The long-term plan shows a pedestrian path along the east side of the creek (shown in blue) which could be developed gradually as properties redeveloped over time.

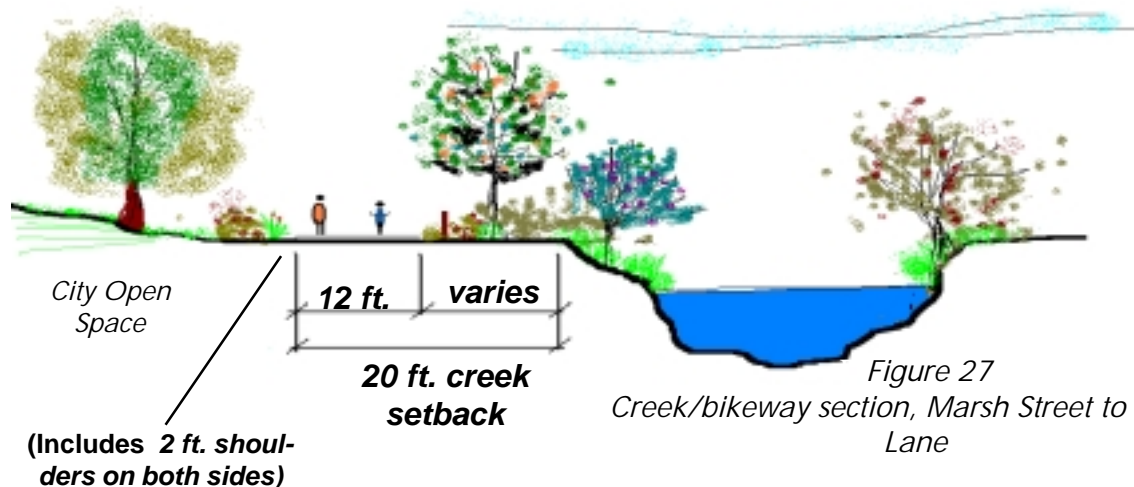


Figure 27
Creek/bikeway section, Marsh Street to Bianchi Lane

PUBLIC PARKING

Parking is critical to the success of most business districts. Based on input received at public meetings as well as opinion survey responses, area residents and property and business owners agree that parking in the Mid-Higuera Enhancement District is important. In the District survey, respondents rated the importance of ten factors in terms of their decision to live or work in the District. Parking was ranked second in importance, after “good neighbors”, and 73% of the respondents noted “availability of parking” as a potential neighborhood problem. Among some speakers at the workshops, there was also a perception voiced that, at this time, the district appears to have ample parking.

A property-by-property field survey was conducted to determine the number of parking spaces available compared to the parking required by Zoning Regulations for existing uses. The survey shows that, when compared with the adjacent Downtown Core area, there is a relatively large amount of on-site parking. Available parking is not distributed evenly throughout the district, however, resulting in some blocks having a significant parking deficit, as shown in Figure 28. The analysis shows that four blocks do not meet parking standards for existing uses when total on-site parking required and available are considered, and that overall, almost one-half of the district’s businesses do not meet parking standards. Land uses in the District have historically been of a low-intensity nature, and until now, employees and customers have been able to find sufficient parking on-street or on adjacent properties with surplus parking. With the arrival of new commercial and residential uses anticipated in the Plan, parking availability is likely to be a significant constraint to remodels, land use changes, and new development.

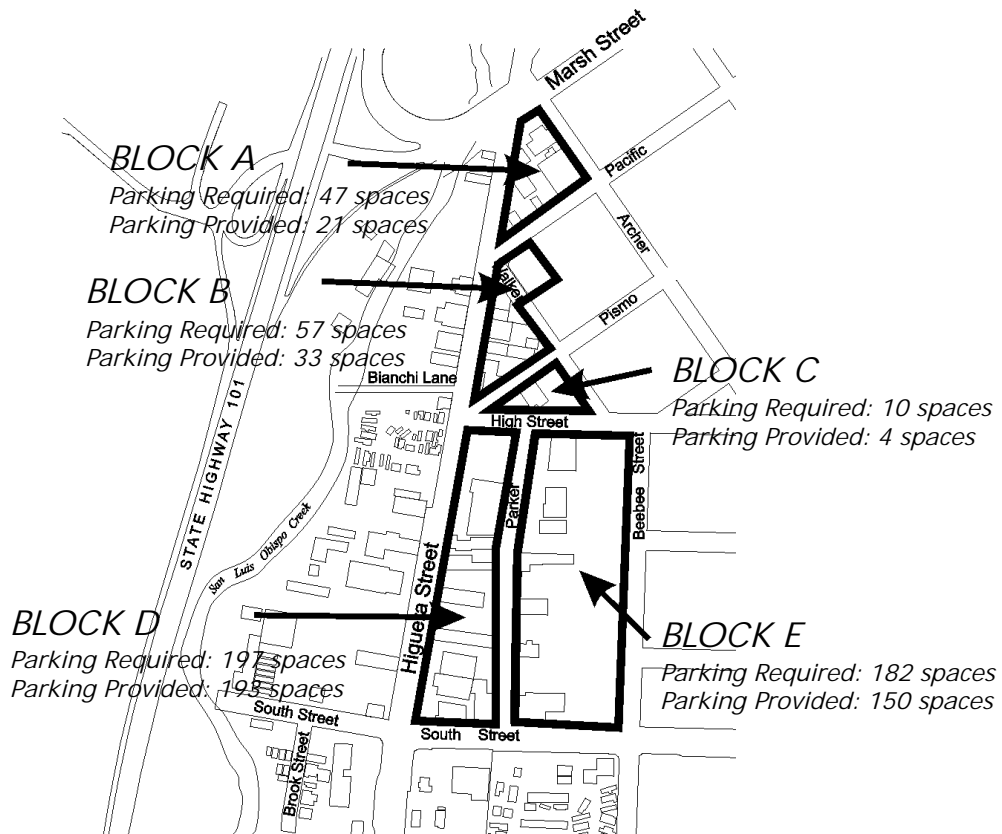


Figure 28
Parking inventory by block



The Enhancement Plan seeks to expand business and residential opportunities and to preserve the District's unique character. The District's character is due, in part, to the many older buildings whose architectural design, layout and site coverage also make it difficult to provide enough parking to meet existing and future parking needs without tearing buildings down and redeveloping. Nevertheless, General Plan policies encourage new businesses and dwellings to include sufficient parking, attractively designed to complement the buildings and the site. A parking strategy that depends wholly on redevelopment, however, will hamper efforts to enhance the District. New or expanded uses requiring more parking would not be possible without providing additional parking, approval of parking exceptions, or a reduction of floor area. From a practical standpoint, this usually will mean that new or expanding businesses must look elsewhere.

The parking shortage for some uses is aggravated by the lack of pedestrian amenities and a pleasant walking environment, particularly on Parker Street, which would allow employees, customers and residents to park within easy walking distance from their destination. The lack of frontage improvements, street lighting, landscaping, and clear entry paths to some businesses may discourage shared parking use and effective parking and pedestrian circulation.

Strategies for reconciling these objectives will depend on both short- and long-term implementation actions. Recommended short-term City actions include:

- a. Establishing a parking committee. The City's Parking Manager will form a Mid-Higuera District Parking Committee, including District residents, and property and business owners, to evaluate future parking needs and explore the formation of a parking assessment district or similar funding technique to purchase and maintain parking to serve the area;

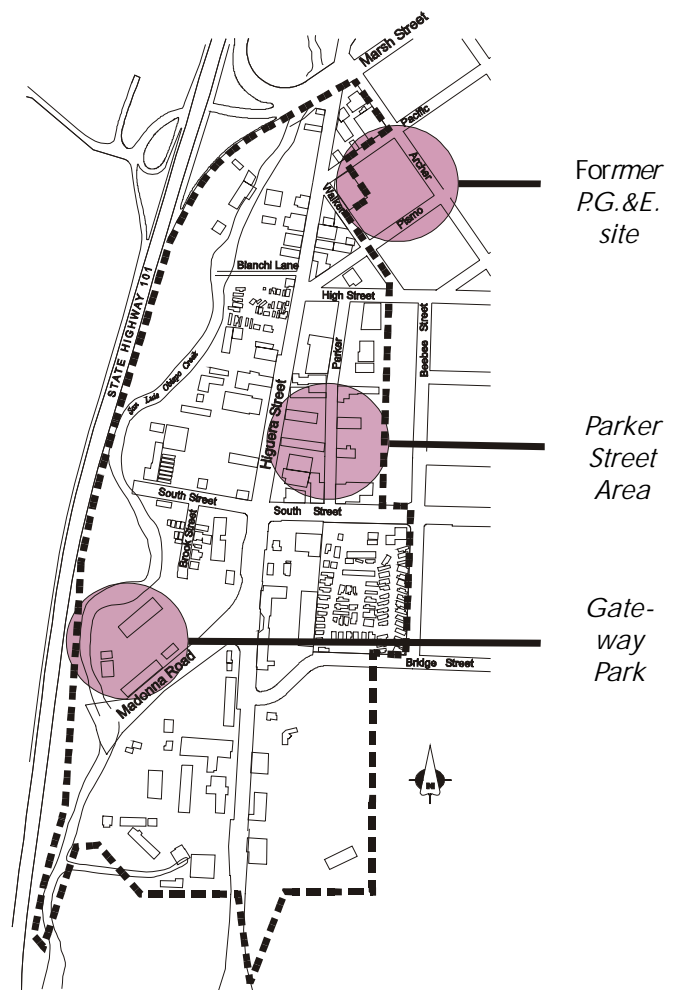


Figure 29. Possible Public Parking Sites

- b. Restriping existing on-street parking spaces or reducing the number of driveway ramps to increase the number of spaces and improve efficiency.
- c. Improving existing parking lots. In cooperation with area property owners and businesses, the City will review existing joint use or shared use parking arrangements and determine the feasibility of expanding or modifying them to more evenly distribute parking supply and demand.
- d. Providing additional parking lots. The parking committee shall evaluate options to lease or purchase two public parking lots -- located near parking deficient blocks at the north and south ends of the District, and in the Gateway Park, as shown in Figure 28 -- which could accommodate an additional 100 to 150 parking spaces.

Long-term City actions may include:

- e. Acquiring additional property. Acquire and improve properties for public parking in the Archer/Walker/Higuera and Parker/High Street areas.
- f. Completing street improvements. Complete street improvements should be installed, including pedestrian amenities and beautification.
- g. Establishing Parking fee. Consider establishing an in-lieu parking fee for new developments within the Mid-Higuera District.



PUBLIC TRANSIT

a. Transit Service. The SLO Transit System will continue to provide service to the Mid-Higuera Street Area, with routes along Higuera Street, Madonna road, and South Street, with transit stops to be added as shown in Figure 30. Bus stops will typically include a shelter, benches, signage and will be developed concurrent with future development as a condition of development approvals.

b. Bus Stops. In the short-term (1-5 years), bus stops within the plan area will be maintained at their current location as determined appropriate by the Transit Manager. Their precise location and design of new bus stops will be determined based on SLO Transit’s customers’ needs and on the arrangement of adjoining land uses and driveways. Bus stop needs will be evaluated by the Transit Manager when changes are made to street widths or when parcels near proposed transit stops are developed or redeveloped. Bus stop designs shall be consistent with the City’s *Short Range Transit Plan* and with Public Improvement Standards contained within this Plan.

Two types of transit stops are planned: 1) standard, at-curb stops and 2) bus turnout stops. At-curb stops are located where existing or planned development patterns make it difficult to acquire

the necessary right-of-way to install turnout bus lanes.

- A** - At-Curb Bus Stop
- B** - Bus Turnout

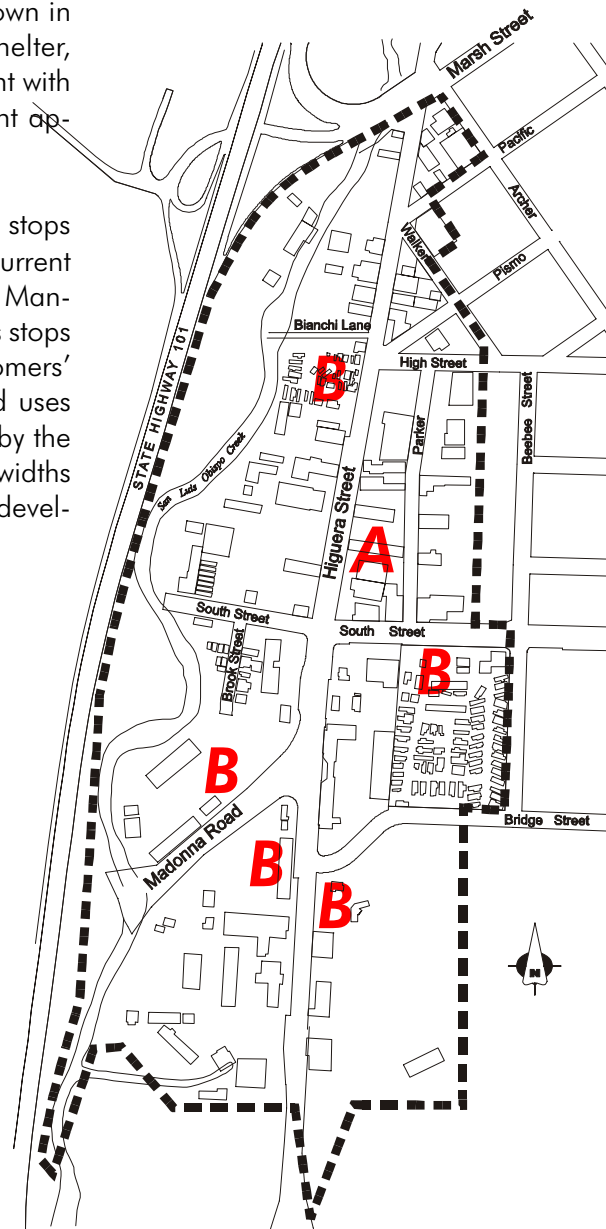


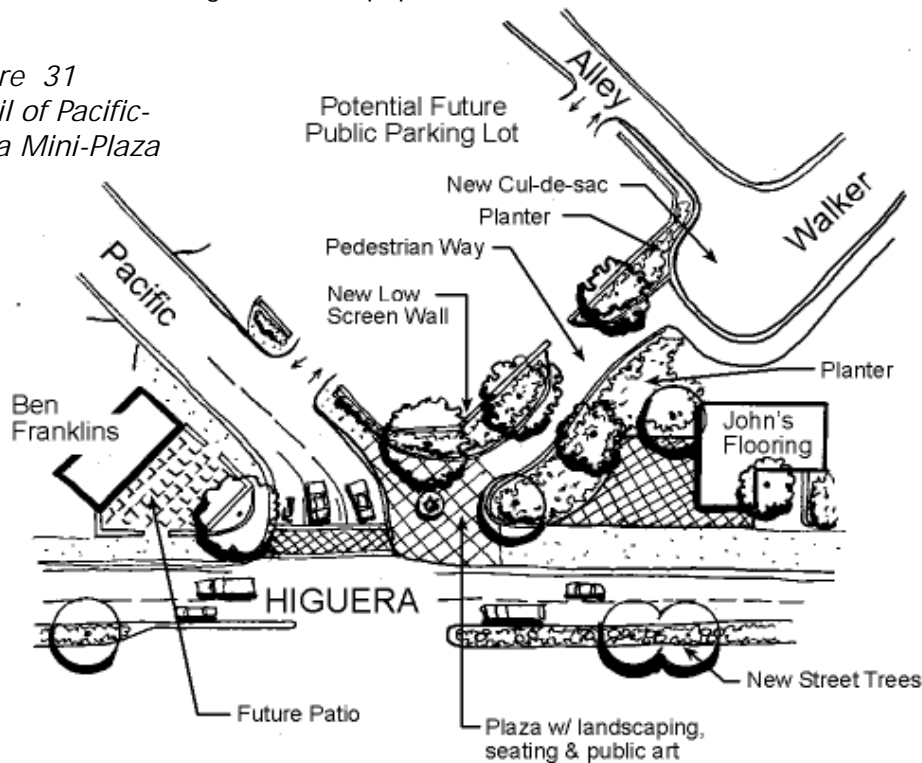
Figure 30
Planned Transit Stops



PARKS, PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE

- a. CalTrans property. The City will acquire the CalTrans property on the north side of Madonna Road and develop a portion into a park and city "gateway" as suggested on the concept plan map. This park will include artwork or exhibits recalling the area's history as a center of the Japanese-American community prior to World War II, and parking/staging area for the Bob Jones Bike Trail.
- b. Walker-Pacific. With the closure of Walker, the City will develop a mini-plaza with seating and landscaping as suggested in Figure 31, and on the short-range concept plan map.
- c. Kiosks. Information kiosks will be provided at a few strategic places that are frequented by pedestrians. Suggested places include the City open space at Marsh and Higuera streets, the new mini plaza at Walker and Pacific streets, the Greyhound station, and in the new Gateway park.
- d. Brook Street Neighborhood Park. In cooperation with community groups, the City will improve a small, city-owned open space at the south end of Brook Street to serve neighborhood recreational needs and to honor the memory of Masaji Eto, a prominent citizen and member of the Japanese-American community in San Luis Obispo.
- e. Creek Pedestrian Trail and Open Space. The City will acquire and maintain open space areas along San Luis Obispo Creek and install and pedestrian trails, bridges and related improvements, as shown in the long-term concept plan.

Figure 31
Plan Detail of Pacific-
Higuera Mini-Plaza



Mid Higuera Street
Enhancement Plan
Implementing the
Plan



IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

AMEND THE GENERAL PLAN





Implementing the Enhancement Plan will require several amendments to the General Plan land use map and text to maintain consistency. The General Plan Land Use Map was amended as shown in Figure 32 and properties rezoned to reflect the land use changes shown in the Enhancement Plan. The Plan and General Plan amendments were adopted by resolution, and the proposed zoning was adopted by ordinance to include the types of uses allowed either individually or in combination as part of and the development standards to be resolved in the designs of mixed-use projects, pursuant to Chapter 17.55 of the Zoning Regulations. New uses or development projects that the Director determines are consistent with these standards shall not require a use permit for mixed uses, unless otherwise required for an exception to development standards.

For the property designated R-4 at the southwest corner of Beebee and South Streets, the Plan provides that if the CalTrans property is redeveloped with tourist commercial uses, *and* the City determines that additional demand exists for tourist commercial uses, the parcel fronting on South Street may be rezoned to C-T-MU.

Land Use Element policy 3.3.3 lists circumstances where relaxing the restrictions on offices is acceptable. This policy should be amended to include the provisions of the Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan among the acceptable situations for greater flexibility for offices. In addition C-S (Commercial Services) properties within the district were rezoned to C-S-MU zone to allow a broader range of uses as shown in the Plan. New development projects or land uses that are consistent with the District's C-S-MU ordinance will not require a use permit, unless otherwise required for an exception to development standards.



Figure 32
Mid-Higuera District
General Plan Designations

-  Open Space
-  General Retail
-  Services and Manufacturing
-  Park
-  Tourist Commercial
-  High Density Residential

AMEND THE ZONING REGULATIONS

The Zoning Ordinance text will need to be amended to fully implement this Enhancement Plan, and the zoning map designations of several properties have been changed as shown in Figure 18. The rezonings are described in detail in item 2 of the Public Policy chapter of this plan. The “Mixed-Use” (MU) overlay zone is a key element of the Plan’s land use strategy. When used in combination with any zone, the MU zone allows combinations of residential and commercial uses which would not otherwise be allowed. Hence, this zoning will allow a broad range of uses in the Mid-Higuera District, reflecting its historic mix of land uses. New development projects or uses within MU zones which are consistent with this Plan need not require Planning Commission review, unless otherwise required by the Zoning Regulations for the individual uses, or for exceptions to development standards. New mixed-use development must meet the mandatory findings listed in Zoning Regulations Section 17.55.040, to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director.

Zoning regulations Section 17.16.025 (G) (2) lists accessory uses and structures that are allowed in the creek setback, subject to several findings and limitations. Subsection (b) explicitly allows walkways and patios, but does not allow bikeways. The Enhancement Plan envisions a walkway and bikeway along the Creek within the setback. The City Council granted an exception to the Creek Setback Ordinance to allow these features in the creeksetback.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMMING

When the City considers its capital improvement program (CIP) budgets, the public improvements included in the Enhancement Plan will be candidates for funding. Once funded, construction will then occur according to the CIP schedule.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

A key component of Enhancement Plan implementation will be the improvements to building facades, parking and landscaped areas. Because these private property improvements will occur over time as the uses of existing buildings and parcels change, the City’s development review process must ensure that the recommendations of the Enhancement Plan are carried out to the maximum extent feasible. The Cultural Heritage Committee, Bicycle Transportation Committee, Parks and Recreation Commission, Architectural Review Commission, Planning Commission, City Council, and City staff will use the Enhancement Plan as a guide in decision-making as individual land use changes and development projects are proposed and reviewed.



TABLE A
General Plan Consistency

City of San Luis Obispo General Plan	Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan	
Policy	Conforms?	Comments
Neighborhoods should be pedestrian-oriented and protected from intrusive traffic (LU 2.1.3)	Yes	Improved sidewalks and walking paths
Neighborhoods should have paths or sidewalks to connect with other areas (LU 2.1.4)	Yes	Improved sidewalks and walking paths
Neighborhoods shall have a mix of uses to serve daily needs of residents (LU 2.2.1)	Yes	Mixed uses encouraged
Nonresidential development shall either preserve existing housing or include replacement dwellings (LU 2.2.1)	Yes	Loss of mobile home units allowed only with reasonable replacement/relocation plan. New housing is encouraged.
Residential areas shall be buffered from nonresidential activities (LU 2.2.2)	Yes	Eventually relocate mobile home park on Higuera to better location and type of housing
Large parking lots should be avoided (LU 2.2.9)	Yes	See design guidelines
New housing should be compatible with existing the neighborhood (LU 2.2.10)	Yes	See design guidelines. Specific findings required for uses near Beebee Street
Commercial uses deemed appropriate within residential areas may be retained (LU 3.2.4)	Yes	Mixed uses encouraged
Allow flood waters to move through natural channels (LU 6.4.3)	Yes	See design guidelines.
Take measures to decrease potential for future flood damage (LU 6.5.1)	Yes	Marsh Street Bridge improvements
Historical resources should be identified, preserved, and if necessary, restored (LU 6.6.1)	Yes	Historic preservation policies
Existing affordable housing shall be preserved (H 2.2.2)	Yes	Relocation/replacement housing requirements
Conversion or elimination of existing housing in commercial areas shall be discouraged (H 3.2.2)	Yes	Provisions to increase housing in area; plan for new multifamily
Mixed-use residential/commercial projects are encouraged (H 5.2.2)	Yes	MU zoning added to encourage work-loft apartments and other mixed-uses.
Creek corridors should be preserved as open space (OS 3.2.1)	Yes	Acquisition of creek areas recommended.
Development shall be located outside creek corridors and setback areas (OS 3.2.1)	Yes	New development will comply with Creek Setback Ordinance.
Development adjacent to open space lands shall provide a buffer between uses (OS 14.2.29)	Yes	Landscape buffer and pedestrian barrier to be provided adjacent to creek areas.
Driveway access on arterial streets should be minimized (CI 7.4)	Yes	See Figure 23.
Billboard removal is encouraged (CO 10.1.1)	Yes	Program recommended to remove billboards
New and existing development should place utilities underground (CO 10.1.3)	Yes	See design guidelines
The City will develop a continuous network of bikeways (CI 3.3)	Yes	Provides bike lanes in Higuera Street and along the east side of the creek.
All arterial streets should provide bike lanes (CI 3.7)	Yes	Bike lanes are retained in Higuera and South Streets
Widen Higuera Street between High & Marsh to 4 lanes (CI 8.4)	Yes	See Figure 23
Higuera Street's visual quality should be upgraded (CI 14.2-14.4)	Yes	Plan would protect views, underground utilities, and generally enhance streetscapes.



TABLE B
How Enhancement Plan Implements General Plan

Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan Features																							
City of San Luis Obispo General Plan Policies	Median with trees and turn lane on Higuera Street	Curbs, gutters, sidewalks and trees on most streets	Realign Bianchi Lane with High Street	Terminate Walker Street & create park	Orient new development to the creek & provide pedestrian access	Open spaces, bike & pedestrian trail along creek	Office, commercial and retail uses near the creek	Drainage & creek flow improvements	Extend Brooks Street and add a mix of residential, office and retail uses	Retail and visitor uses on corner of South and Beebe Streets	Multifamily residential units on corner of Beebe and Bridge Streets	Place utilities underground	Preserve & enhance historical resources	Convention Center & visitor serving uses on southwest corner of Madonna & Higuera	Design guidelines	Provide vehicular access alternatives to Higuera Street	Remove billboards	Shared and mixed use parking reductions allowed	Provide creek setbacks	Encourage relocation of PG&E sub-station	Provide for & protect mobile home owners		
Neighborhoods should be pedestrian-oriented & protected from intrusive traffic (LU 2.1.3)		X		X		X	X		X														
Neighborhoods should have paths or sidewalks to connect with other areas (LU 2.1.4)		X		X	X	X	X		X														
Neighborhoods shall have a mix of uses to serve daily needs of residents (LU 2.2.1)							X		X	X													
Nonresidential development shall either preserve existing housing or include replacement dwellings (LU 2.2.1)											X												X
Residential areas shall be buffered from nonresidential activities (LU 2.2.2)		X		X																			X
Large parking lots should be avoided (LU 2.2.9)															X			X					
New housing should be compatible with existing the neighborhood (LU 2.2.10)															X								
Commercial uses deemed appropriate within residential areas may be retained (LU 3.2.4)									X														
Allow flood waters to move through natural channels (LU 6.4.3)								X															
Take measures to decrease potential for future flood damage (LU 6.5.1)								X												X			



TABLE B, continued
How Enhancement Plan Implements General Plan

Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan Features																												
City of San Luis Obispo General Plan Policies	Median with trees and turn lane on Higuera Street	Curbs, gutters, sidewalks and trees on most streets	Realign Bianchi Lane with High Street	Terminate Walker Street & create mini-plaza	Orient new development to the creek & provide pedestrian access	Open spaces, bike & pedestrian trail along creek	Office, commercial and retail uses near the creek	Drainage & creek flow improvements	Extend Brook Street as a cul-de-sac street; allow a mix of residential and commercial uses	Retail and visitor uses on corner of South and Beebee Streets	Multifamily residential units on corner of Beebee and Bridge Streets	Place utilities underground	Preserve & enhance historical resources	Convention Center & visitor serving uses on south-west corner of Madonna & Higuera	Design guidelines	Provide vehicular access alternatives to Higuera	Remove billboards	Shared and mixed use parking reductions allowed	Provide creek setbacks	Encourage relocation of PG&E sub-station	Provide for & protect mobile home owners							
Historical resources should be identified, preserved, and if necessary, restored (LU 6.6.1)													X															
Existing affordable housing shall be preserved (H 2.2.2)																												X
Conversion or elimination of existing housing in commercial areas shall be discouraged (H 3.2.2)									X																		X	
Mixed-use residential/commercial projects are encouraged (H 5.2.2.)									X	X																		
Creek corridors should be preserved as open space (OS 3.2.1)						X																						
Development shall be located outside creek corridors and setback areas (OS 3.2.1)																		X										
Development adjacent to open space lands shall provide a buffer between uses (OS 14.2.29)						X																						
Driveway access on arterial streets should be minimized (CI 7.4)	X															X												
Billboard removal is encouraged (CO 10.1.1)																	X											
New and existing development should place utilities underground (CO 10.1.3)												X																



ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY

It is important that plans provide for land uses that are, in fact, reasonably feasible from an economic standpoint. In the case of Mid-Higuera, the economic viability of the area is clear without elaborate forecasting. A survey of existing land uses found the area to be largely built out and to have no significant vacancy problems for the district as a whole. In fact, the plan area includes several successful businesses including Hayward Lumber, Smart & Final, and Trader Joe's. The Enhancement Plan retains commercial zoning for much of district; in some places, the plan increases flexibility among the allowed and conditionally allowed uses. Clearly, then, this already viable commercial area can be expected to remain so in the future if the basic designations and regulatory framework are unchanged (or as with the Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan, made even more flexible).

REVENUE GENERATION

One objective of the Plan is to increase revenues to the City. It should be noted, however, that this commercial district is relatively small, especially compared to the nearby Downtown and Madonna Road retail areas. Thus, changes in this small area are not likely to significantly impact the City's overall fiscal position. More importantly, the commercial area is already largely built out and already includes several significant retail businesses. Therefore, the change in sales tax revenues attributable to new businesses in the plan area will likely be relatively modest, at least in the short term.

One major land use revision is the re-designation of the CalTrans property south of Madonna Road to visitor-serving commercial. The idea is to provide a "convention center"

or other tourist-oriented use on this site – such as a hotel and venue for large meetings of professional associations, educational and non-profit organizations, industry and trade groups, etc. These kinds of meetings are not frequently held in San Luis Obispo because of the limited facilities able to accommodate such activities. The City, however, would likely be a popular site for such events if meeting facilities were available. San Luis Obispo obviously attracts large numbers of visitors because of its natural beauty, special downtown, Mission and museums, special events, Performing Arts Center, and Cal Poly, among many other amenities. It would, accordingly, be a popular site for "convention" – type meetings, probably at the regional and Statewide level.

The CalTrans site appears appropriate for this kind of use because of its size, location close to Downtown, access to the freeway, proximity to the creek and proposed parks, bikeways and walking paths, visibility, and historic and environmental qualities. If a convention center were eventually built there, tourism in San Luis Obispo would increase, and revenues to the City from sales and bed taxes would rise, too. A successful visitor-serving use and/or conference center would surely have a fiscal benefit for the City.

Although the viability of this kind of facility appears reasonable to expect, detailed feasibility studies would be important prior to undertaking such a project. Those studies will be more meaningful when important variables such as the proposed size and ownership are clearer. Of course, proceeding with this concept is contingent on CalTrans relocating its offices, shops and yard elsewhere. In 2000, CalTrans began a feasibility study to evaluate relocation options.



SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

- Ensure new development conforms with the plan.
- Amend the General Plan Land Use map to change the CalTrans property from Public to Tourist-Commercial.
- Rezone the properties within the Enhancement District as shown in Figure 18.
- Clarify that Zoning Regulations section 17.16.025 (G) (2) (b) allows combined walkways-bikeways in the creek setback, or grant an exception to allow compatible public recreational bikeways.
- Place an MU - Mixed Use overlay on the Mid-Higuera Enhancement area, pursuant to Chapter 17.55 of the Zoning Regulations.
- Incorporate or reference the Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan Design Guidelines in the Architectural Review Commission's citywide architectural guidelines and procedures.
- Program into the City's Capital Improvement Plan the land purchases and public improvements described in the Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan.
- Complete the Phase 2 Waterways Management Program and plan for its implementation to help mitigate flood hazards.
- Encourage the relocation of the CalTrans offices, shop and yard.
- Work with PG&E to acquire and/or improve the abandoned substation for public parking use.
- Facilitate meetings with the property-owners, Housing Authority or other housing providers regarding redevelopment of the Village Park mobilehome site.
- Adjust the City's street tree list to include the species recommended in the Design Guidelines.



Mid Higuera Street
Enhancement Plan
Short- and Long
term Plans



Figure 33

SHORT TERM CONCEPT PLAN





A New cul-de-sac at Walker Street & realign Pacific Street creating a new mini-plaza including public art.



A Pacific Street new mini-plaza including public art



B Widen Higuera Street & beautify with new lighting, landscaping, furniture, medians, and underground utilities.



C Enhance Parker Street with sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and under-grounded utilities. (Mid-long term)

Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan

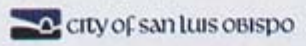
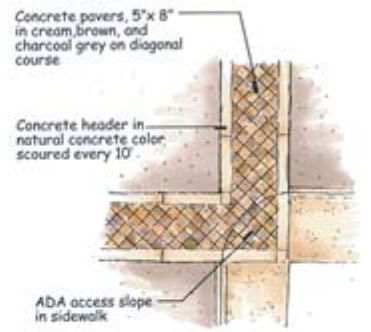


Figure 34

LONG TERM CONCEPT PLAN





A Pedestrian bridge near South Street terminus and Madonna Road Park
 Improve Marsh St. Bridge to reduce flow obstructions

Right turn lane
 Storm drainage path flows back to creek
 Bikeway
 Future pedestrian access to open space

Realign Bianchi Lane with High Street
 Bianchi bridge moved and raised above flood level
 Reciprocal parking and driveway access

Alternative concept with visitor serving commercial type uses on South Street

Add medians between High Street & South Street

South Street widened to four lanes, bike lanes with left turn pocket

Multifamily residential housing

Drainage & creek flow improvements

Left turn lane pocket
 Continuous sidewalk on Madonna Road
 Crosswalk, typical through open space to creek
 New signal on Higuera at Convention Center

Drainage realignment & improvements
 Convention Center and/or visitor serving uses

Office, commercial and retail uses
 OPEN SPACE

Public trail access at South Street terminus

Church to be relocated
 Brook Street extension with a mix of uses

Emergency access only



B Creekside outdoor spaces with pedestrian access in portion of creek setback



C Add medians with turn pockets on Madonna Road

Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan



Mid Higuera Street
Enhancement Plan
Design Guidelines



DESIGN GUIDELINES

I. NEW DEVELOPMENT AND PROPERTY RENOVATIONS

Introduction

The objective of these design guidelines is to create a “main street” architectural character along Higuera Street which reflects some aspects of Downtown San Luis Obispo but does not duplicate it. Downtown elements like pedestrian-oriented building scale and location, varied storefronts and displays, street trees and other amenities to create a pedestrian-friendly environment are encouraged. Landscape medians are planned along Higuera Street to beautify the street corridor. Parking lots are generally to be located to the side or rear of buildings to screen and de-emphasize automobiles and encourage walking and bicycling. These and other tools for enhancing the district’s appearance are described below. The guidelines apply to new development and remodels in this district. They address site planning, architectural treatments, pedestrian and auto access, parking areas, signs, lighting, and landscaping and are part of the City’s architectural guidelines.

A. SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN

Site planning refers to the arrangement of buildings and parking and circulation areas, the size of pedestrian spaces and landscaping, and how these features relate to each other.

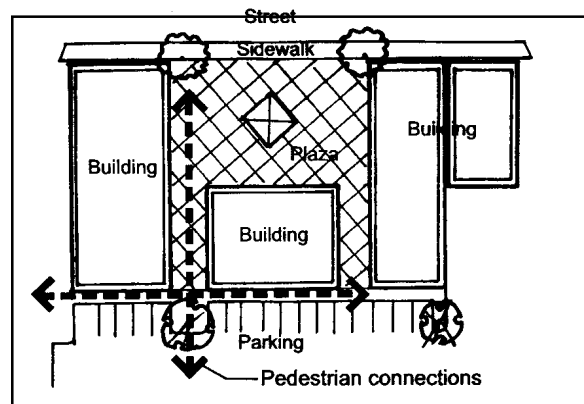


Figure 35. Building-parking relationship

1. Parking Areas

- a. Parking areas should be located to the rear or between buildings, as shown in Figure 35.
- b. For service-commercial uses, parking may be located along the street frontage provided it is well landscaped and screened from the street with a 3 ft. tall wall or shrubs.
- c. Parking lots should have a landscape planter every six parking spaces. A 5-foot wide or wider planted area should separate the parking lot from an adjacent street.
- d. Along Higuera Street, new parking lots shall be located to the rear of businesses and accessible from adjacent streets and/or common driveways. At least ten percent of parking lot areas shall be landscaped.





2. *Pedestrian Areas*

- a. Crosswalks should be provided along Higuera Street, with public access to rear parking lots via courtyards or arcades.
- b. Buildings should be sited close to, and oriented toward the street, with merchandise displays where appropriate.
- c. Clear glass is recommended at street level to create pedestrian interest.
- d. Pedestrian linkages should be provided within the project to other commercial projects and adjacent neighborhoods.
- e. Porticoes, arcades, roof overhangs, awnings and signage should be used at entries to help orient pedestrians.
- f. Each project is encouraged to have its own architectural identity, yet the site plan must work with adjacent properties to provide safe vehicle and pedestrian circulation.

3. *Utility Areas*

- a. Locate noise- and/or odor-producing uses away from pedestrian and residential areas. Utility areas should be grouped, screened and designed similar to the main structure.
- b. Service, delivery storage, utility, and trash areas should be integrated into the project design and screened from public view with structural enclosures or landscaping.

4. *Development within the 100-year Floodplain*

- a. In general, new buildings within a 100-year flood zone should not cover more lot area than the development it replaces, unless the City Engineer determines that the proposed floor area will not increase flood hazards, consistent with city standards.

Bianchi Lane Bridge, looking west



- b. For projects between Higuera Street and the creek, applicants and their site designers should meet with the City Engineer early in the process. Site plans in this area should incorporate unimpeded flood water drainage routes from Higuera Street to the creek. Such drainage routes should not be blocked by berms, solid fencing, or other features which would block drainage flows. or include landscaping so dense that it will catch and hold debris.



B. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

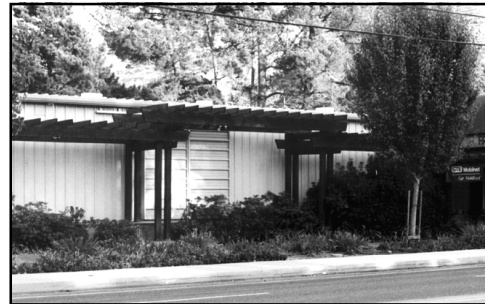
These guidelines promote the existing eclectic mix of building styles and do not mandate any particular style. In general, new development should emphasize historic architectural forms and materials, not corporate architectural styles. These guidelines encourage well-designed forms and treatments of building walls, windows, doors, architectural details and colors and materials.



*Example of entry,
base and roof line variation*

1. Form, Massing and Orientation

- a. All sides of buildings should have detailed articulation and should be designed to a level appropriate to their public visibility.
- b. Large buildings should incorporate changes in vertical and horizontal planes to avoid a box-like appearance. Incorporate vertical elements to create multiple "bays" giving the appearance of several smaller buildings.
- c. Each building should have a recognizable base, roofline, and entry.
- d. Articulated storefronts, rather than blank walls, should face public streets and pedestrian spaces. Reveals, cornice treatments, pilasters, exterior material changes, arcades, trellises, and awnings can be used to help articulate otherwise plain building facades.
- e. Doors, windows, and openings should be used to add visual interest to the wall plane.
- f. Along Higuera Street, buildings should generally not exceed two-stories at the street, and be designed so that upper floors are "stepped" or otherwise designed to preserve views of Cerro San Luis and maintain pedestrian scale at the street.
- g. Architectural-grade, decorative lighting should be used at or near pedestrian entries and to illuminate wall or projecting signs and to accentuate building form and details.



Example of trellis use



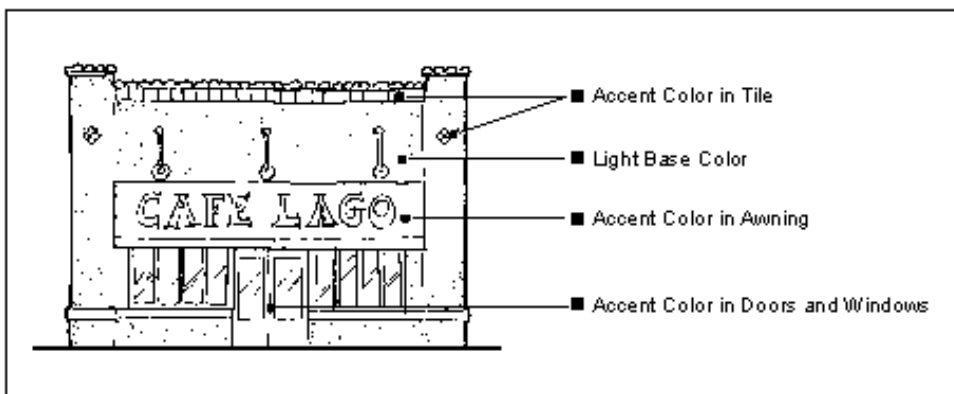
2. Roofs

- a. Multiform roofs, such as gable and shed roof combinations, are encouraged to create an interesting roof line and lessen the building's apparent mass and height.
- b. Roof materials and colors are important aspects of the overall building design. Materials and colors should complement the building's architecture style.
- c. Appropriate materials for pitched roofs include, but are not limited to, clay or integrally colored tile, metal, concrete tile, or architectural dimensional composition shingle.
- d. Discouraged materials include brightly colored roofing tiles, corrugated fiberglass or unfinished metal panel roofing and highly reflective roofing.
- e. Parapet roofs should include elements such as parapet caps, projecting cornices, and cornice details or variety in shape and pitch to provide architectural interest.
- f. Roof-mounted equipment should be screened so as to not be visible from public areas at the ground level. Flat roofs should be well articulated with parapets, pitched facades, and architectural elements.



3. Walls / Facades

- a. Utilize reveal patterns, changes in materials, building pop-outs, columns, pilasters, and recessed areas to create shadow patterns and depth on the wall surfaces.
- b. Architectural details should be used to enhance buildings and adjacent pedestrian spaces by adding color, shadows, and interesting forms. Ornamental tile, built-up stucco relief, and special molding are a few of the recommended treatments.
- c. Emphasize windows, trellises, arcades, roof overhangs, recessed or projected stories, columns, balconies, wainscots, and awnings.
- d. Materials and colors should be consistent with the desired architectural style and building character.



Example of wall treatments



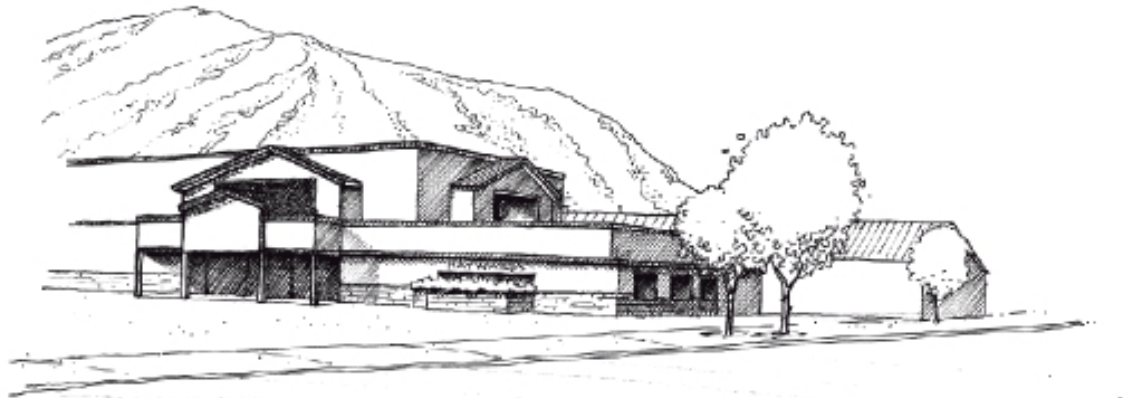
4. *Windows, Doors, and Storefronts*

Well-designed storefronts use windows, doors, wall articulation, colors, and materials to create a sense of entry interest and pedestrian scale.

- a. Window type, shape, and proportion should reinforce the building's architectural style.
- b. Doors and windows must be coordinated with each other and should have high quality molding and framing.
- c. Awnings with imprinted signage is encouraged. Lettering style and size should be in scale with the awning.
- d. Awnings should be regularly maintained and kept free from tears, fading, and stains.

5. *Respect for Views*

Cerro San Luis is a scenic and visually prominent focal point. Northbound Higuera Street traffic can generally view the peak over the tops of Highway 101, trees and mostly single-story buildings. As new buildings are built, they should be designed to preserve views of Cerro San Luis from Higuera Street. As shown below, upper floors should generally be setback from the street to avoid blocking views, or buildings otherwise designed to maintain and enhance views.



C. *Façade Renovation Potential*

Façade improvements can make a dramatic difference in the attractiveness and desirability of a property. Historic area features should be preserved, or restored. The following design examples are presented to illustrate the potential for renovating building facades within the district and should not to be interpreted as the only design solution for renovating a particular building.



Figure 36

Potential Improvements

1. "Fifties- Style" Commercial Building on Higuera Street

BEFORE



AFTER

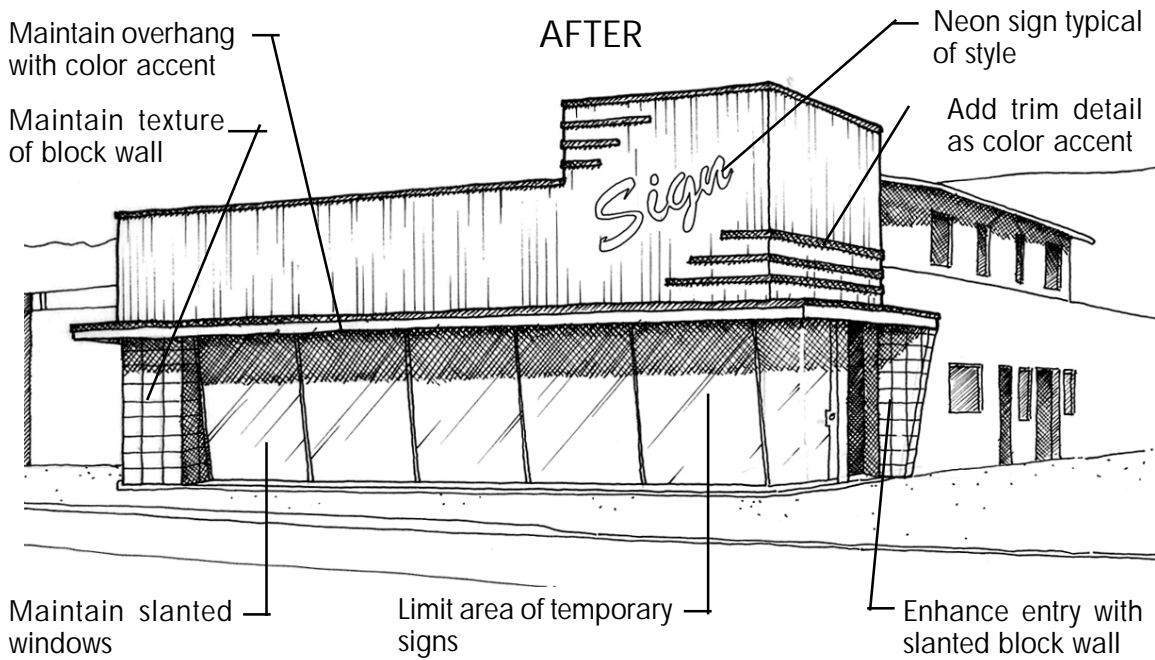


Figure 37
Potential Improvements
2. Weber's Bread Store

BEFORE



AFTER

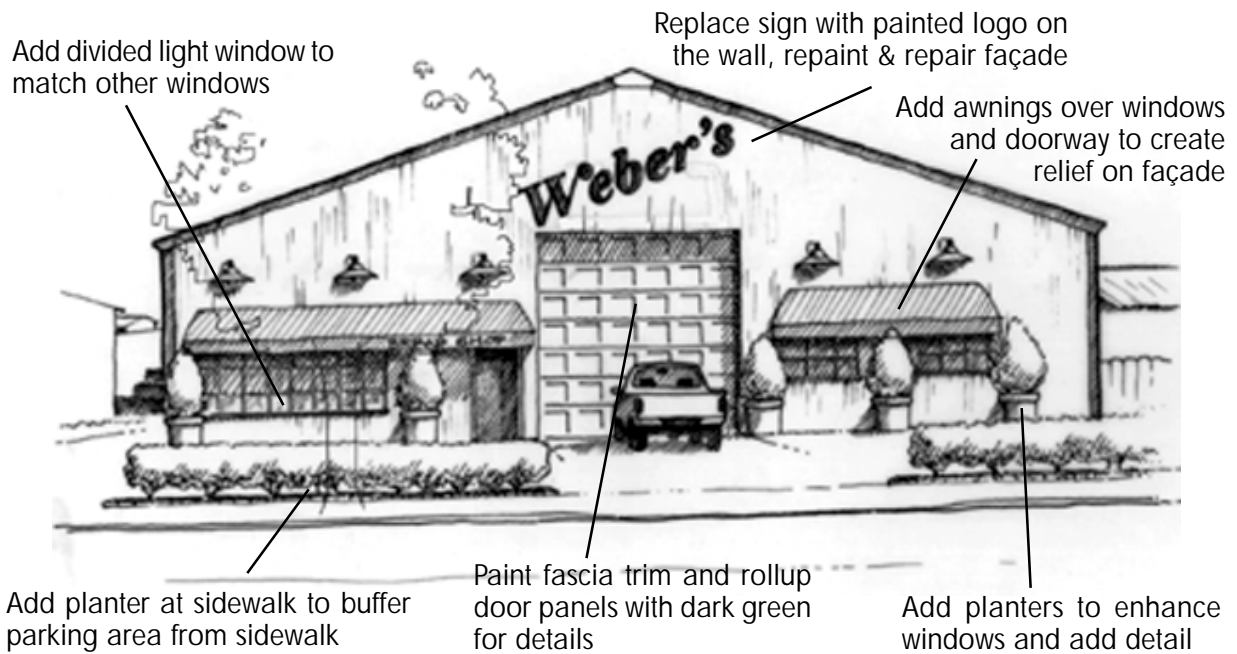
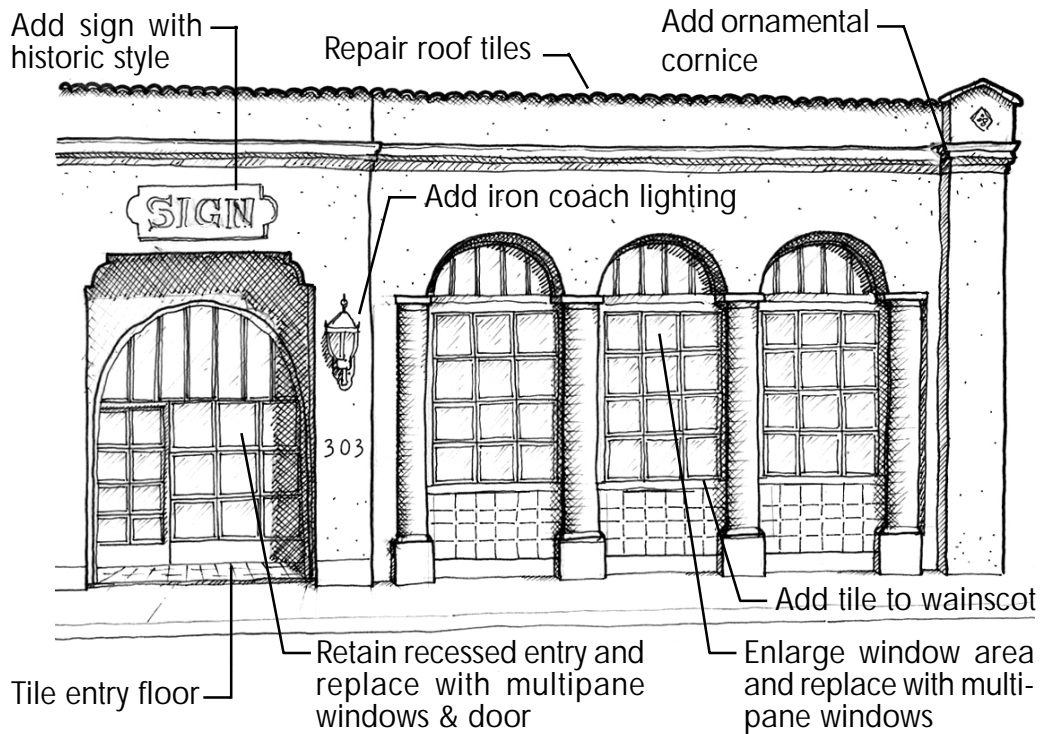


Figure 38

3. Potential Improvements - A. Savers Wholesale Co.
BEFORE



AFTER



D. Pedestrian Spaces and Circulation

Attractive pedestrian spaces are encouraged. These include sidewalks, pathways, courtyards, patios, plazas, seating areas, landscaping and other amenities adjacent to the building entry or façade. Including these features in new and renovated property can dramatically improve the appearance of the area and attract more shoppers.

1. Pedestrian spaces should have detailed and well-defined paving design. Materials may include concrete or brick pavers, tile, scored, colored and textured concrete, or flagstone.
2. Provide breaks in low walls and planters to provide for pedestrian circulation and to allow flood flows to return to the creek.
3. Provide sidewalks and pathways to and from streets and parking lots, buildings, and other public spaces. These should be enhanced with lighting, planting, benches, fountains, public art, trellises and textured paving. Use these elements as focal points along pedestrian spaces.



E. Landscape, Public Art, and Site Furnishings

Attractively designed sites will help beautify and revitalize building frontages and the overall appearance of the Higuera, Walker, Pismo, and Parker Street areas. Landscaping, public art, and site furnishings should be included with new development. Site furnishings could include sculpture, fountains, murals, benches, lighting fixtures, decorative banners, trashcans, and moveable pots or planters. The theme of the public art could commemorate historic events or people of the district.

1. Vines, espaliers, and potted plants are excellent elements for providing texture to walls, columns, and posts, "softening" large wall areas, and discouraging graffiti.
2. Planting should be used to soften or screen parking, trash, and service areas.
3. Flowering trees and colorful planting should be used to accent vehicular and pedestrian entries.
4. Use drought- and wind-tolerant planting where possible.
5. Use a variety of tree types, sizes and forms.
6. Deciduous and evergreen trees should be used to provide a variety of texture, color, and form in planting areas.



7. Tree grates will both allow water into and protect the tree root area but also provide walking surface where the sidewalk is narrow in older established areas. These grates may be a simple concrete style as shown in Figure 41, or if funding allows, a more ornate cast iron style with to complement other street furnishings.
8. Planters with low walls behind them should be used to screen parking and service areas from the street.
9. Site furniture and light fixtures should follow the same design concepts as the major structures on the site.
10. Public art should be provided in City open spaces, parks and in pedestrian areas. Wall murals are also encouraged. Plaques commemorating historic events could be incorporated into street furniture, or as wall signs. An opportunity exists for recreating the "Gateway to Downtown" arch that once existed along Higuera Street near Madonna Road, or to create a "historic walk" with posts denoting historic places, events, or personalities in the area, either along Higuera Street or along the future creek trail corridor. Public art may be incorporated into the new mini-plaza at the Pacific / Higuera intersection.



F. Parking



Properly designed and landscaped parking lots will enhance the urban environment by providing shade and greenery, as well as convenient access for shoppers and visitors. Parking lot entrances should be well defined with landscaping. They should be shared by adjacent properties where possible to minimize the number of driveways onto Higuera Street.

1. Parking lots should be landscaped with trees and shrubs to provide shade and soften the impact of large expanses of paving. Trees with large canopies are encouraged.
2. Pedestrian ways should be incorporated in parking lots where possible, using accented paving, trellises, and lighting.
3. Parking lots should be attractively and appropriately lit for safety. Light standards should be in keeping with pedestrian-scale (16-foot tall or less, from finished grade to the light fixture), and light poles and fixtures shall be shielded to prevent glare across property lines or skyward.



G. Signs

When signs are integrated into the building design, they contribute to the quality and ambience of the commercial complex or streetscape. These guidelines are intended to balance the legitimate identification or signage needs of businesses with the need to beautify the district and prevent visual clutter.

1. These guidelines are intended to supplement the City's Sign Regulations.
 - a. Signs should be integrated into the building design, complement the architecture, and be compatible with the building colors and materials.
 - b. Signs may be painted on the building.
 - c. Signs should not protrude above the roof line, fascia, eave, or be located on the rooftop.
2. Handcrafted, wall-mounted, and hanging signs are encouraged to be unique to the business and to convey a business's image.
 - a. Specially designed logos, symbols, and icons add individuality to businesses and are encouraged.
3. Window signs should be grouped to minimize blocking views into business.



Projecting Wall Sign

4. Small-scale kiosks and information booths are encouraged and should be located in pedestrian gathering areas near parking lots or along walkways.
5. Internally-illuminated cabinet signs are discouraged and shall require Architectural Review Commission approval.

H. Site and Building Lighting

These guidelines apply to on-site lighting and not street lighting, which is discussed separately under Streetscape Improvements. Effective lighting will provide safety for vehicles and pedestrians, advertisement and security for businesses. Light types may include pole lights, spot-lighting, wall-mounted lights, landscape lighting, and sconce lighting.

1. New development that is adjacent to residential neighborhoods should be particularly careful to avoid bright lighting and glare.
2. Spot lighting should be shielded from neighboring properties and directed at a specific object or target, such as an entry.



3. Light fixtures should be designed or selected to be architecturally compatible with the main structures on a site.
4. Wall-mounted lighting should be positioned no higher than 10 feet from ground level and should be directed downward to reduce glare.
5. Pedestrian light poles along pathways and sidewalks should be 10 to 16 feet high.
6. The overall height of parking lot light standards should not exceed 16 feet from ground to the light fixture, and should reflect the architectural character of the project.
7. Industrial-style wallpack lighting and unshielded area lights are prohibited.



II. PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

Introduction

Public improvements that are incorporated into the public right-of-way complement and enhance surrounding development. Such improvement typically include street furniture, plantings and street trees, sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, and light fixtures.

The “streetscape,” the visual corridor including the street, sidewalks, parkways, street trees, and other features in the right-of-way, acts as a unifying element for the project area by creating a consistent visual link through the area. Streetscape improvements are often implemented as a cooperative effort between the City and private development. The proposed improvements will occur as street widening, street realignment, and property redevelopment occur within the area, and should include undergrounding the overhead utilities. The suggested treatments may also be implemented when driveways onto Higuera are reconfigured as necessary to accommodate new development or redevelopment

A. Street Furnishings

1. Benches will be of the general style as seen in the examples and will be provided in City locations and businesses located on every block and sited so as not to block pedestrian circulation.

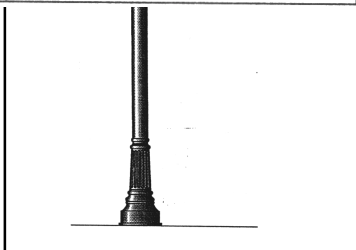
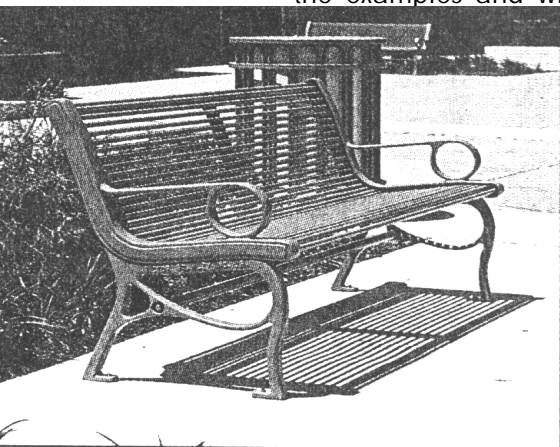


Figure 39
Decorative streetlight

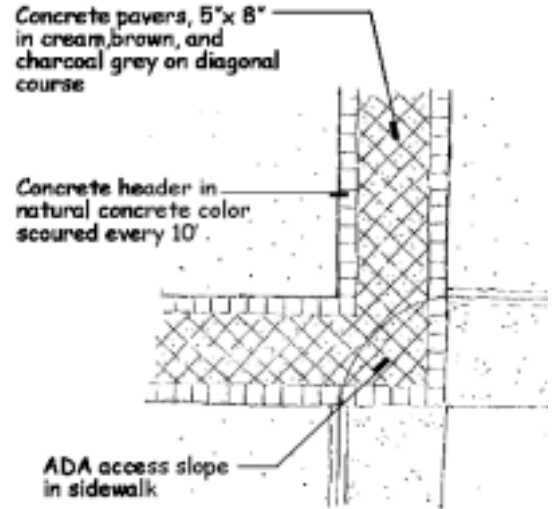
2. Trash and recycling receptacles should complement the bench style and may be combined with the benches and or street lighting, and should be located on every block.

3. Light fixtures should have a historic character, similar to the one shown in Figure 39, and be of an appropriate scale for the area of use. The taller style (25'-30') will be used at intersections, while the shorter style (16' recommended) will be used along public sidewalks.

4. In areas of high pedestrian traffic volumes, ornamental tree guards that complement the bench and trash receptacles should be used.



Figure 40, Crosswalk Detail



B. Crosswalks

1. Contrasting crosswalks are proposed at key intersections along Higuera Street, as well as main intersections on Parker and the extension of Brook Street, as shown in Figure 40. These should be of colored pavers with contrasting concrete headers to enhance their appearance and pedestrian safety.

C. Landscaping

1. Street trees should be provided along the public sidewalk, to meet city standards. The variety should provide shade while allowing visibility to the storefronts and minimizing organic litter. A species different from those utilized downtown may be chosen. Suggested trees that will provide the canopy spread needed for the arterial streets include Quercus Virgiana, Raywood Ash, Chinese Pistache, and London Plane. (Some of these are not on the 2000 City approved street tree list, which may need to be revised, accordingly).



2. Medians: Street trees should be provided within the landscaped medians to buffer the wide expanse of the street. Median trees should not interfere with traveler visibility or truck traffic. The groundcover should be drought tolerant and provide seasonal color or textural interest but should not grow to obstruct views for motorists.

3. Boxed and tub plant containers should also be used to enhance sidewalks, plazas, building entries, or courtyards. The style should complement the street furniture.
4. Tree grates should be used to provide texture in the sidewalk. Either a 3' wide concrete acid-etched grate and paver band detail, as shown in Figure 41 or cast iron type grate should be used.

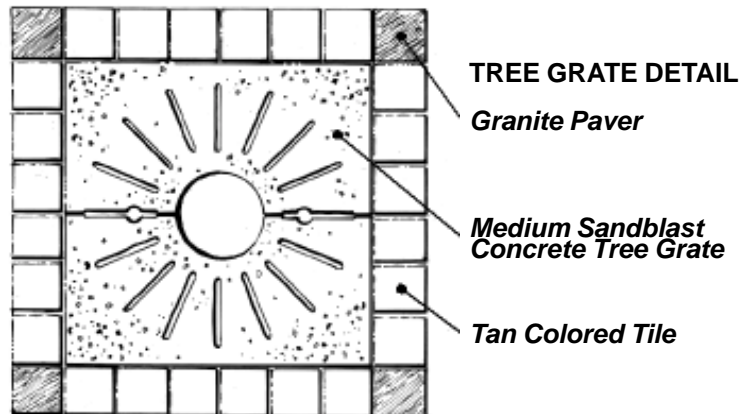


Figure 41
Tree grate detail



D. Planned Street Improvements

The following streetscape views are provided to illustrate the positive impact that the planned improvements will have on an otherwise plain street environment.

BEFORE



Figure 42: View looking south on Higuera Street at Marsh Street

AFTER



Planned Improvements

1. Higuera Street

- a. Planted center median with new street trees
- b. Underground utilities
- c. Expand City open space/habitat restoration area to the western corner
- d. Add contrasting colored/textured crosswalks
- e. Install new street lighting, trees and street furniture.
- f. Realign Bianchi Lane with High Street
- g. Install left turn pocket at Bridge Street
- h. Close Walker Street at Higuera and construct pedestrian plaza

2. Parker Street

- a. Underground utilities
- b. Add sidewalk to both sides of the street
- c. Add new street lights with historic character
- d. Add planters next to buildings to improve street facades while maintaining necessary handicapped access
- e. Plant street trees per City standards

3. South Street

- a. Widen South Street Between Parker and just south of Beebee Streets; install left turn pockets.

4. Madonna Road

- a. Install landscape median with left turn pockets (with redevelopment of CalTrans property)
- b. Install sidewalk along south side of street

5. Brook Street

- a. Relocate church out of right-of-way.
- b. Extend street as a residential cul-de-sac (with redevelopment of CalTrans property)



Figure 43: View looking northwest on Parker Street at South Street

BEFORE



AFTER



BIBLIOGRAPHY / SOURCES

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- City of San Luis Obispo Circulation Element, November 1994.
- City of San Luis Obispo Flood Damage Prevention Regulations (Ord. #1259), 1994.
- City of San Luis Obispo Flood Management Policy (Resolution 5738), 1983.
- City of San Luis Obispo General Plan Land Use Element, July 1996.
- City of San Luis Obispo Housing Element, September 1994.
- City of San Luis Obispo Mid-Higuera Enhancement Plan, Background Report & Special Studies, November, 1999.
- City of San Luis Obispo Noise Element, May 1996.
- City of San Luis Obispo Zoning Regulations, February 21, 1997.
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- Survey Report for Flood Control and Related Purposes, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1986.
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RESOLUTION NO. 1965 (2001 Series)

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO APPROVING THE MID-HIGUERA STREET ENHANCEMENT PLAN

WHEREAS, the Cultural Heritage Committee, Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Bicycle Advisory Committee, and the Architectural Review Commission have held public hearings on the Draft Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan; and

WHEREAS, after reviewing the Draft Plan and considering public testimony, these advisory bodies recommended various changes and additions to the Draft Plan regarding flood hazard reduction, creeks, historic preservation, transportation and circulation, land use, and aesthetics and where feasible and appropriate, the changes have been incorporated into the Draft Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Director of Community Development issued a mitigated negative declaration of environmental impact, pursuant to provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and based on an initial environmental study (ER 39-98) which was prepared and circulated for the required public review period; and

WHEREAS, in consideration of public testimony, advisory body recommendations, staff analysis, and its own deliberations, the City Council has determined that the Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan is necessary to implement General Plan policies and programs designed to reduce flood hazards, improve compatibility of adjacent land uses, preserve historic resources, encourage alternative transportation modes, establish architectural guidelines, secure necessary public improvements for a designated "Optional Use and Special Design Area", improve public access to parks and open space, improve the safety and appearance of streets and public areas, and enhance the economic vitality of the Mid-Higuera Street area.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of San Luis Obispo as follows:

SECTION 1. Findings.

1. The Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan conforms with the General Plan, the Bicycle Transportation Plan, and the City's Historic Preservation Program Guidelines intended to preserve historic resources.
2. The Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan implements specific General Plan policies regarding land use,



circulation, housing, flood hazard prevention, recreation and open space preservation, including the following policies (numbers refer to San Luis Obispo General Plan Digest policies): LU 3.1.4 (Mid-Higuera Enhancement), LU 3.4.2 (Tourist-Commercial), LU 3.7 (Mixed Uses), LU 4.5 (Walking Environment), LU 6.1.1 (Open Space), LU 6.4.3 (Flood Hazard Reduction), LU 6.4.6 (Creek Setbacks), LU 6.6. (Community Heritage), LU 8.5 (Mid-Higuera Area), H5.2.2 (Mixed Use), H 6.2.2 (Housing above Commercial), H 3.2.2 (Housing Conservation), CI 3.3 (Bikeways), CI 4.5 (Pedestrian Crossings), and CI 7.4 (Driveway Access).

3. The Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan is an “Area Plan”, intended to carry out policies and programs of the General Plan and to guide public and private development, public improvements, and capital improvement programming within the District as defined by the Plan.

SECTION 2. Environmental Determination (ER 39-98). The City Council has considered the environmental determination for the Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan and hereby approves a mitigated negative declaration of environmental impact, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

SECTION 3. General Plan Amendment. The General Plan is hereby amended as shown in Exhibit A.

SECTION 4. Creek Setback Exception. A reduced creek setback of variable width to allow construction of a Class 1 bikeway along San Luis Obispo Creek between Marsh and Madonna Road as shown in the Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan is hereby approved, based on the following findings:

- A. The proposed setback exception implements General Plan policies for recreational uses within open space and conservation areas (OS 12.1.2, OS 12.2.1c)
- B. The bikeway’s location and design will minimize impacts to scenic resources, water quality, and riparian habitat; and
- C. The exception will not limit the city’s design options for providing flood control measures that are needed to achieve adopted city flood policies; and
- D. The exception will not prevent the implementation of city-adopted plans, nor increase the adverse environmental effects of implementing such plans; and
- E. There are circumstances applying to the site, such as size, shape or topography, which do not apply generally to land in the vicinity with the same zoning, that would deprive the property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity with the same zoning; and
- F. The exception will not constitute a grant of special privilege, an entitlement inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity with the same zoning; and
- G. The exception will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to other property in the area of the project or downstream; and
- H. Site development cannot be accomplished with a redesign of the project; and
- I. Redesign of the project would deny the property owner reasonable use of the property. (“Reasonable use of the property” in the case of new development may include less development than indicated by zoning Resolution No. 1965 (2001 Series)

the case of additional development on an already developed site, “reasonable development” may mean that no additional development is reasonable considering site constraints and the existing development’s scale, design, or density.)

SECTION 5. Plan Adoption. The City Council Hearing Draft Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan is hereby adopted as an area plan guiding public and private land use and improvements within the area identified in the Plan as the “Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement District.”



SECTION 6. Implementation. To implement the Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan, the City Council hereby directs that:

- A. The Community Development Director shall initiate rezoning of the area as shown on Page 33 of the Council Hearing Draft Plan.
- B. The urban design and architectural guidelines are hereby adopted for the Mid-Higuera District. Public and private development projects shall be consistent with the provisions of the Plan.
- C. City Departments shall implement the Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan through their design and development of capital improvement programs, operating programs, and in developing budgeting and grant requests.

SECTION 7. Amendments. The Mid-Higuera Street Enhancement Plan may be amended by the City Council at any time. Citizens, the Planning Commission or the City Council, may initiate such changes. The Plan may be amended as often as needed, subject to the same procedures set forth by the City Council for amending specific plans.

Upon motion of Vice Mayor Ewan, seconded by Council Member Schwartz, and on the following roll call vote:

AYES: Council members Marx, Schwartz and Vice Mayor Ewan

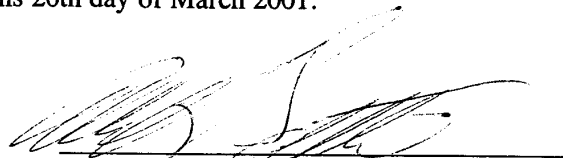
NOES: Council members Mulholland and Mayor Settle

ABSENT: None



Resolution No. 1965 (2001 Series)
Page 4

The foregoing resolution was adopted this 20th day of March 2001.



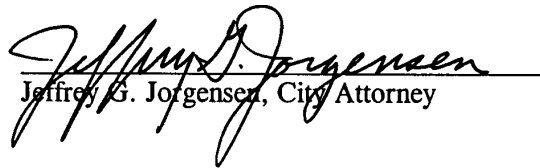
Mayor Allen Settle

ATTEST:



Lee Price, City Clerk

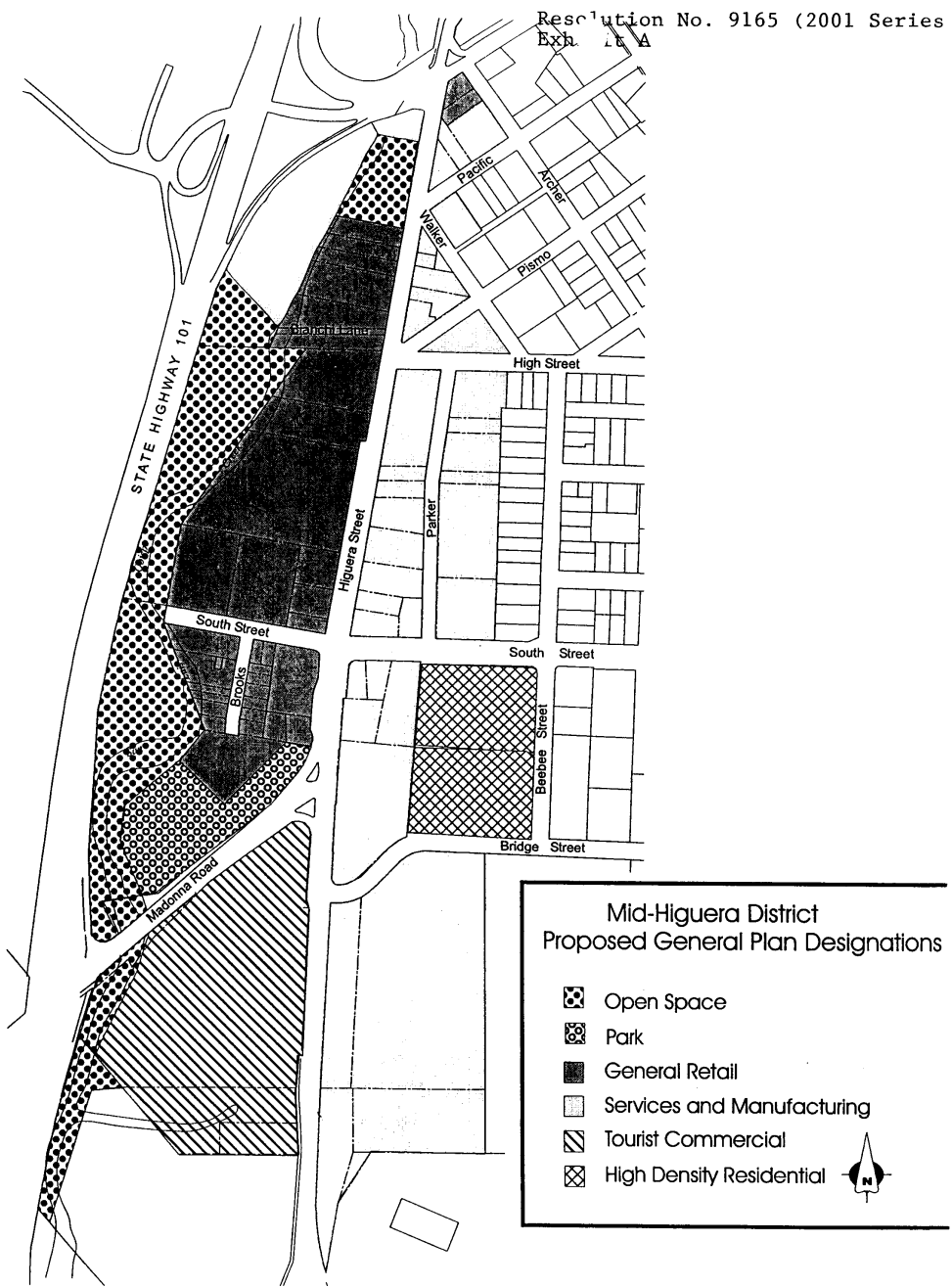
APPROVED AS TO FORM:



Jeffrey G. Jorgensen, City Attorney



Resolution No. 1965 (2001 Series)
EXHIBIT A





*New Gateway
Park*

Crawford
Multari
Clark &
Mohr

Cannon
ASSOCIATES

firma

